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AME-THE-SCANDAL CONTEST RESULTS

Inside the NSC • White House Twilight

THE EDITORS: SOLIDARITY FORSAKEN • DAVID BRION DAVIS ON MARTIN LUTHER KING

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUES 3,755 & 3,756

WASHINGTON, D.C. — JANUARY 5 & 12, 1987

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COVER photograph © Bruce Davidson/Magnum Photos, from his book *Subway* (Aperture). Article on page 21. Note to our readers: This is a combined issue of TNR. We won't be publishing next week.

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 196, Numbers 1 & 2, Issues 3,755 & 3,756, January 5 & 12, 1987. (Printed on December 17, 1986.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 5 & 12, July 13 & 20, Aug. 10 & 17, and Sept. 14 & 21, 1987) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Leadership Network advertising (212) 684-5500. Yearly subscriptions, $56; foreign, $81; Canada, $70. Back issues, $2.50 (includes postage & handling).

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(ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and Bell & Howell, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, OH 44691. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. **Subscribers:** Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to **Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 56515, Boulder, CO 80322.** For subscription problems call **800-525-0643.**

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FROM WASHINGTON

FIFTH AMENDMENT PATRIOTS

Five men, including two active-duty military officers, have now taken the Fifth Amendment rather than tell a congressional committee about their role in Iran-amok. Moist-eyed Lt. Col. Oliver North says there's nothing he'd like better than to reveal all about the activities he went to such lengths to keep secret. Then he declines, with a tragic sigh, to say anything. Strong congressmen swoon.

Historically, the privilege against self-incrimination evolved as a protection for political dissenters. Nevertheless, the Fifth Amendment applies to government officials just like anyone else. Oliver North has a perfect right to take the Fifth. What he has no right to do is to strike a pose of heroic innocence, prattle on about upholding the Constitution, and expect anyone to believe him.

The Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination is one of the many rules that make the criminal justice system a highly stylized fact-finding process, quite different from the way people go about gathering information and drawing conclusions in their everyday lives. Other examples include the rules of evidence and the burden of proof "beyond a reasonable doubt." These protections are rightly cherished. But outside the courtroom, people are entitled to use their common sense. They are not bound by the court rules, they are not bound by any court's conclusion, and they are not bound to wait until the wheels of justice have turned before reaching their own conclusions.

Under the Fifth Amendment, you can't be compelled to offer testimony against yourself. As a necessary corollary, judges and juries in criminal trials are not supposed to infer anything one way or another from an accused person's refusal to testify. But others are free to infer whatever they wish. And, of course, the logical inference is overwhelming: people who take the Fifth have something to hide.

Liberals are understandably but needlessly squeamish on this point because of the experience of the McCarthy period. Between 1950 and 1956, about 500 people took the Fifth rather than testify about their Communist connections. Those who didn't, such as the Hollywood Ten, often went to jail. Even those who did—"Fifth-Amendment Communists," as Senator McCarthy called them—generally lost their jobs. As president of the Screen Actors Guild, Ronald Reagan endorsed the motion picture industry's policy of firing "uncooperative witnesses."

This history is what leads the great civil rights lawyer Joe Rauh to say, as he did recently on ABC News "Nightline": "The Fifth Amendment plea has nothing, really, to do with guilt or innocence." That's noble, but absurd. Rauh's famous client, Lillian Hellman, took the Fifth and then swore until her death years later that she had not been a Communist. Her purpose, she said, was to protect her friends. If that's true (and Hellman's reputation for veracity has not outlived her), she had no right to plead the Fifth. She was in contempt of Congress and possibly guilty of perjury.

The injustice done to those who took the Fifth during the McCarthy period was not the widespread assumption that they were or had been Communists. That assumption was correct. The injustice was penalizing them for their political beliefs and associations. Today, laws against membership in the Communist Party are recognized as unconstitutional. The laws Ollie North is refusing to reveal whether he broke, for fear of revealing that he broke them, are not unconstitutional. Yes, he's still entitled not to testify. But White House communications director Patrick Buchanan is not entitled to get all blustery ("that creature," he called Representative Michael Barnes on CBS's "Face the Nation") when people draw the obvious conclusion.

But anyway, Buchanan does not mind if "some technical laws" were broken in the far more important effort to "stop Communism in Central America." (And if the president's communications director is not communicating on behalf of the president, the president hasn't said so.) Buchanan's argument boils down to the proposition that it's OK to break the law provided that, first, your motives are high-minded, and second, you're willing to take your punishment like a man.

In the case of Ollie North, both of Buchanan's factual premises are at least open to dispute. You do not hire Edward Bennett Williams's law firm to make sure you get the punishment you deserve. Nor do you take the Fifth Amendment if your goal is purity through suffering. As for North's motives, I suppose they were similar to those of the Hollywood Communists: a combustible blend of misplaced idealism and swollen self-importance. It's clear from the facts that have already come out that North relished his role and wasn't averse to exaggerating it. Like all amateur totalitarians, he's a power-tripper.

On the theoretical level, Buchanan's list of historical examples of people who broke the law in a higher cause gets longer and sillier by the day. Having been ridiculed out of his analogy between public acts of civil disobedience and secret lawbreaking by government officials, his latest gambit is: "Look, friend, this country was founded by moral men in an act of treason against the Crown." And so, once again, the Founding Fathers are called upon to bail out the Reagan administration's Central America policy. (The first time was when Reagan himself said the *contras* were "the moral equivalent of our Founding Fathers.")

This example is wonderfully revealing. The point about the Founding Fathers is that they regarded the authority of the British Crown as illegitimate. I can refer Buchanan to a document that explains all this rather clearly. Said document also makes clear that the Founding Fathers regarded a challenge to established law—even law they thought not merely mistaken but actually illegitimate—as a serious step, and certainly nothing to be done on the sly. Based on this example, the question for Buchanan—and for the president he communicates for—is whether they regard the authority of American law as illegitimate. Of course they may remain silent if the answer is incriminating.

Keep searching, Pat, if you like. No doubt you can find some examples of laws that were disobeyed—even by elected leaders—to the world's betterment. Hindsight is omniscient. One reason some of us prefer that important national policies be decided democratically and pursued openly is that nobody is omniscient about the future. Some people just think they are. And that's what laws are for.

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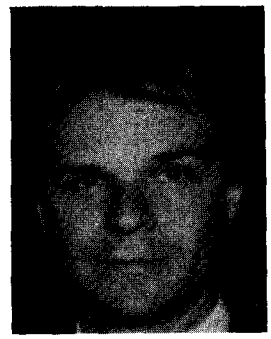

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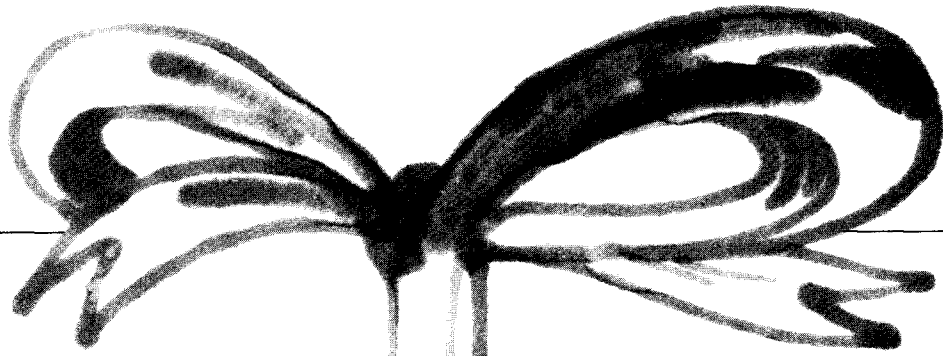

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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CORRESPONDENCE

KIDS TODAY

To the editors:
While Jeffrey L. Pasley states that the *Carleton Observer*, a student paper of which he was a founder and editor that is funded by the Institute for Educational Affairs, cannot be called conservative ("Paper Pushers," December 1), this is not quite the impression his requests for money conveyed. Indeed, as he and his co-founders put it, "Although our editorial stance does not identically reflect traditional conservative values, we view the liberalism on campus and the attendant liberal causes and organizations with skepticism. . . . Our primary objective is to challenge and question the liberalism on campus with an eye towards encouraging debate and controversy." It's not good for young people to think they can get away with biting the hand that's fed them!

LESLIE LENKOWSKY
President, Institute for Educational Affairs
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:
Jeffrey Pasley's otherwise trenchant article on campus newspaper skirmishing was marred by a final paragraph that contained nary a true sentence. Pasley reports that the Center for National Policy has begun to fund student liberal journals, the "first" of which is the *Harvard Perspective*. This "mild-mannered" journal has an apparently tropical-mannered editor, who wants to "make it OK to say 'I'm a liberal.'"

Perspective (not *Harvard Perspective*) does not and never will receive money from the CNP. Largely through the staff's efforts, however, the CNP was inspired to provide seed money to journals on other campuses. The individual quoted by Pasley is not *Perspective*'s editor, but the president of the organization, scrambling to fund 16 pages of newsprint once a month.

Month after month, our message has been that it's no good to be a liberal in rhetoric only. This month's cover story is a critical comment on "Neoliberals and the Democratic Party." If, as Pasley writes, *Perspective* is not "the stuff of which movements are made," it may be because we choose journalism over propaganda. So be it. We are, however, actively trying to prove him wrong.

KYLE CHADWICK
Editor in Chief, Perspective
Cambridge, Massachusetts

To the editors:
Crocker Coulson attempts to paint College Republicans as politically shallow students attracted to conservatism for purely selfish motives ("Lost Generation"). Coulson describes it as "vapid materialism" that is used by the Republican Party to capture college students. This line of reasoning is typical of liberals who are fundamentally antagonistic to capitalism. I myself am a freshman, and one of my primary goals in life is to make money and live comfortably.

DANIEL HARPER
Normal, Illinois

MUERA BILINGUALISM

To the editors:
In "Viva Bilingualism" (November 24), James Fallows seems to have missed the point. No one opposes Americans learning a foreign language. On the contrary, those of us who oppose bilingualism find the failure of our educational system to teach foreign languages appalling. The ability to speak another language is a blessing. Proficiency in English is a necessity.

There is growing evidence that large segments of our immigrant population and even first-generation Americans are not learning English well enough to assimilate into the American mainstream. In Colorado half of all Hispanic children never graduate from high school. Lack of language proficiency is certainly one of the primary factors. A 1986 GAO report on the use of bilingual ballots in Texas during the 1984 elections found that 77 percent of those using the Spanish-language ballot were born in the United States, a clear indication that linguistic ghettos do exist.

I was amused at Fallows's attempt to equate his experience as an American living in Japan with that of immigrants to the United States. Japan is a closed society that takes great pride in its racial purity. Foreigners may live in Japan on a temporary basis, but they never become Japanese in either the legal or the social sense. In America we pride ourselves on our racial and ethnic diversity, but we have always maintained a common language. Universal acceptance of English as that language has meant the difference between a relatively harmonious multiethnic society and a Tower of Babel. No one ever said Americans shouldn't learn a foreign language. What we're saying is that America should not become a bilingual society.

RICHARD D. LAMM
Governor
State of Colorado
Denver, Colorado

SENIOR SECURITY

To the editors:
"Owe, No!" (November 24) suggests that the "shabby reality of our [U.S.] indebtedness makes it clear . . . trimming Social Security and phasing out farm problems" would solve our nation's fiscal ills. Sure, it would mean "sacrifice for many people," but apparently not for you. You seem safe and smug in putting the burden on two of the most vulnerable segments of society.

Would you prefer that citizens 65 and older be reduced to poverty or mere survival levels, after having worked for years and paid into the Social Security system? Or should the elderly go into deep debt individually to provide shelter, food, and clothing, and let their heirs pay the obligations their parents could not meet? Given rising costs, debts left behind could well exceed the $2,500 cost to every family for "serving our foreign debt," as your editorial asserts.

Let me remind you that many Social Security recipients continue to pay taxes. Most of today's elderly were brought up with the admonition to "save for a rainy day." Are those who followed that advice to be made the target of an economy that overspends on defense because of a paranoiac federal administration?

GRACE M. MADLEY
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
JANUARY 5 & 12, 1987

SOLIDARITY FORSAKEN

Jean-Jacques Rousseau spun fantasies for mankind, and for Poland he spun martial fantasies. Nonetheless, he seemed to understand that fate had destined her to live among mighty neighbors and that though her problems might realistically be perceived as primarily military, her survival could not be ensured on the battlefield. Poland would survive, Rousseau consoled himself, through the stubborn memory of the Poles. Certainly they could rely on no one else's memory and no one else's loyalty.

History proved that abundantly. At Yalta, after all and after Hitler, Western statesmen once again wrote Poland off to the loss column (that is, to Stalin), and they did not think it would intrude on their agenda very soon. But it did, scarcely a decade later. And once more, a quarter century after that. Strange, isn't it, that those who bear the burden of the universal ideals of heaven on earth are often also the ones among whom the primordial instincts for kin and home assert themselves with a special and brave fervor. And Poland did experience, most tangibly and almost bodily, these universal ideals—communism and proletarian internationalism—imposed from outside and against its organic social formations. Its pristine nonviolent resistance to this imposition should be a particularly stirring act of witness to the fact that these ideals don't work, and that they are brutal in practice besides.

The recent Polish democratic resistance cut across society. It had been quietly building for some time, through numerous organizations. In the summer of 1980 industrialized workers suddenly coalesced and burst upon the country as Solidarity; the village peasantry mobilized around the local parish churches; and the circles of intellectuals and artists joined together in KOR. (As Czeslaw Milosz put it, "What is poetry that does not save / nations or people?") The alliance even included communists who had begun to despair that dogma and discipline would never bend to the palpable need for liberalization and reform.

The fuel of the resistance was, of course, not just social grievance. There was the distinctly Polish grievance, a national history of other wounds and humiliations and dismemberments, most of them administered by Russia and Russians. And Polish martyrology also had a specifically Catholic character; the country was seen by its patriots as the Christ of Nations. No wonder Poland proved so obdurate against totalitarian momentum, particularly to one from the east.

Obdurate or not, Poland's back was broken, even if its spirit was not. First in 1946. Again in 1956. And yet again, five years ago, when General Jaruzelski imposed martial law. This is one of the lessons of our era that we are reluctant to grasp: a people can be crushed—although, here and there and from time to time, its will seems not altogether spent. Many Poles accept as an indispensable article of faith the words of Lord Byron's poem rendered by Adam Mickiewicz into a Polish anthem:

> Battle for freedom
> once begun,
> bequeathed by father
> passes to the son.
> A hundred times crushed
> by the foe's might
> still it will be won . . .

Sad to say, this anthem may be illusion and no more.

Whenever a tyranny is imposed on a people, a tragedy has come to pass. It neither compensates nor consoles a tyrannized people to know that another people is also tyrannized. Chile's agony is not eased by its knowledge of Poland's, or Poland's agony by its knowledge of Bulgaria's or South Africa's or Vietnam's. Still, there is something that makes one feel an extra pang for countries like Poland that have had a democratic experience and are now cast backward into dictatorship, that have been independent and now suffer under the heel of foreign boots. We know

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too much about the cruel caprices played on mankind in this century to say that such retrogressions run counter to the laws of nature or the laws of history. But there are countries, immiserated and brutalized, of whose capacities for democracy we are uncertain. We hope for their liberation and that they may dispel our uncertainty. There is no doubt about the potential for a truly independent Poland. Moreover, were it not for the Red Army and the Communist parties of the Soviet Union and Poland, the country would be a democratic polity and a free society, a model of resourceful development and a bridge between tradition and modernity, the home of its own culture and a link, as it long had been, to Paris and London and New York. The measure of the Polish tragedy is what might have been.

The Solidarity movement seems, at least in retrospect, to have been inevitable. The great Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert denies even its heroism: "It didn't require great character at all / our refusal disagreement and resistance / we had a shred of necessary courage. . . ." In this view, Solidarity was almost axiomatic. (Just as, from the perspective of Poland's present rulers, Solidarity's suppression was axiomatic.) But in fact it took enormous courage to resist in Poland in 1980 and 1981, and it takes enormous stamina to continue to resist in 1986. The resilience of the regime and the persistence of its submission to Moscow must be disheartening enough. What must be even more dishearten-

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
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3.	TELL IT TO THE MARINES	—	1
4.	HEADING SOUTH	*	4
5.	NOW VOYAGER	—	1
6.	STREET CLEANING	*	3
7.	HOMO LUDENS	10	2
8.	MISSION CULTURELLE	*	2
9.	FISH STORY	—	1
10.	IN SEARCH OF NEWS	—	1

1. BOTH SIDES NOW

Iranamok. What does it mean that while the NSC was arming Iran, the CIA was aiding Iraq? Is this one dumb policy, or two dumb policies? Who's got time to think? There are Canadian investors, the Khashoggi & Ghorbanifar show, Bush's aides, the Sultan of Brunei, Khashoggi's swami, odd burglaries, Israeli countercharges, and reports that arms money went into U.S. politics. The story's become unwieldy, gigantic, hard to follow. Given diminishing dramatic returns to each confusing new revelation, that becomes a problem to those reporting it.

2. THE THRALL IS GONE

Reagan. The White House used to have to pressure advertisers to keep Reagan out of TV spots. Now "Reagan's Way," a syndicated TV paean, won't be broadcast as scheduled because the purported advertisers have pulled out. R.I.P.

3. TELL IT TO THE MARINES

Oliver North. Lt. Col. Oliver North's remarkable TV appearance on the Hill has raised high feelings about him. Given the sympathetic reaction to his lip-biting presence, and the Kipling-quoting, check-writing support cast of congressmen, North's lawyer might have done well to let him plead the Fifth all day. Buttons with his picture on them, and the device "American Hero," are already in distribution. The North story plays less well in print.

4. HEADING SOUTH

Contras. The unsurprising consensus is that the *contras* are the big losers in the White House scandal. They must demonstrate great success before their congressional money runs out. The president, even with a resolved scandal, will not be able to make a credible pitch on their behalf. Only the satirists and the Pentagon, however, seem to have had the leisure to note that the whole of the Reagan agenda is similarly rudderless.

5. NOW VOYAGER

Voyager. There is something about great personal effort, however pointless the deed may appear, that is irresistible. Flying a plane non-stop around the world without refueling, like sailing alone or surviving a wilderness ordeal, is a matter of individual heroism, of challenge met, with no further questions asked. The flight of the Voyager may not be Lindbergh, but the tradition is the same.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

6. STREET CLEANING

Ethics. Among the myriad spin-offs from the insider-trading scandals are: business grad schools that are considering making ethics a required course (ethics is now an elective); placement firms that are noting more rigorous background checking; and scores of firms that are establishing ethics codes. One view holds that all this is pointless because insider cheaters suffer from a psychiatric disorder and can't help themselves.

7. HOMO LUDENS

Toys. In America's child-obsessed culture, toys as shapers of character are getting as much attention as schools. Fundamentalists have Christian toys, feminists have non-sexist toys, pacifists have anti-war toys, etc. Specifically black toys are appearing more frequently now, the latest being black "action figure" superheroes. Of course, higher principle notwithstanding, everybody's playing by the same consumerist rules, but never mind.

8. MISSION CULTURELLE

Language. California voted English its official language in November; now bilingual education is on the block. Distrust of foreign language subcultures is widespread throughout the world. The worry in the Southwest is that a large self-sustaining Spanish language culture could become a kind of Quebec, and that nothing should be done to encourage that. However, virtually every second-generation immigrant is either bilingual or speaks English only.

9. FISH STORY

Food. You aren't what you eat: eat calcium and avoid osteoporosis; eat fiber and avoid colon cancer; eat chicken to avoid the ill effects of red meat; eat potassium to avoid the effects of all the diuretics you're eating to avoid the effects of a fatal diet. Currently hot enough to bring forth national media ads: eating fish oils to avoid heart problems.

10. IN SEARCH OF NEWS

Curiosa. Ramtha, a 35,000-year-old warrior who speaks through a Pacific Northwest medium, has for some reason made both major newsweeklies and one network. The Swami Chandra, adviser to Brunei's sultan and to Adnan Khashoggi, and friend to everybody, has popped up in Iranamok. One of the most warmly received books of the season is *Learned Pigs and Fireproof Women*, about people with wild talents. The bizarre and the occult, it has been argued, are most popular during periods of uncertainty.

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ing is the faltering attention of Poland's Western friends, those of us who were so exhilarated by the events in Gdansk and in Warsaw that we said to ourselves and to others, "Solidarity Forever."

It did not last. Not because the Jaruzelski regime made substantial concessions to the democratic impulses of the Polish people, which it didn't. But simply because the tenure of our outrage is short. It does not tarry over one country or one situation too long. That would be boring. And so a consensus seems to be emerging among the liberal Democrats (who in cases like this suddenly become realpolitikers) and among Republicans generally (who don't like sanctions ever, lest the principle be too firmly established that democracy is more important than doing business, a dangerous heresy). The new consensus says that sanctions should be lifted. Let's get back to relations as usual. For no specific good reason, for no specific reason at all.

Many are coming to see the situation in Poland as normal. How, after five years, could a stable situation be other than normal? As the *Boston Globe* put it in its martial law anniversary editorial, "Poland's 5-Year Balancing Act," "Poland today is neither independent nor under foreign occupation. . . . The political hopes of Solidarity have not been realized, but neither has the repression." This is, rather, the *Globe*'s balancing act. It is also nonsense, wicked nonsense. Forget for the moment that there are at least two Soviet divisions stationed on Polish soil, and God only knows how many units of Moscow's political police. (What would happen if Poland tried to disentangle itself from the uncomfortable embrace of the Warsaw Pact?) The assertion that the repression has not worked is sheer doublethink. When martial law was imposed five years ago, the very capacity of the Communist regime to rule was in question. Soviet troops might have secured its continuance directly. But this was an unsatisfactory option for Moscow; it did not relish a vivid evocation of Afghanistan in Central Europe.

IN ANY CASE, the long apprenticed local Communist regime was itself quite capable of intensifying the repressive routines and ending the threat to Party rule. This it did. And with this also ended the democratic challenge of Poland's civil society to the Polish state. The state tolerates only what it must, which admittedly is more than what is tolerated in Bulgaria or in communism's metropolitan power, the U.S.S.R. But the Polish state won't tolerate independent trade unions and it doesn't tolerate politics. A politics that replicated the rich pluralistic ethos of civil society would change the state from a communist dictatorship to a democratic commonwealth. The United States is rightly fixed in its foreign policy debates on how best to assist developing societies to move toward democracy, a very precarious enterprise at best in most cases. Yet here is a society and a people so mature in their democratic aspirations, and we are all but avowedly indifferent. It is the treason of democrats.

But having conceded that the Polish state tolerates more than Bulgaria does, let's not concede too much. A news account in the *Boston Globe* the very next day undercut even further the assumptions of its editorial. The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights has issued a characteristically scrupulous report, "Repression Disguised as Law," which details human rights abuses in Poland. The repression has its present aspects and its contingent aspects. One law has already "been used to imprison people for virtually any type of political activity or expression." Judges who show "any vestige of independence" are dismissed. Summary proceedings are now the rule with dissidents. Defense lawyers are harassed and find themselves, along with other oppositionists, charged with "economic crimes." Police violence and prison beatings are routine events, routinely covered up. The *Globe* editorial read happy tidings into the punishment of the four police officers who murdered Father Jerzy Popieluszko in 1984. It ignored the alleged "suicide" of Father Pitor Poplawski, whose battered body showed distinct marks of torture. Awful as the present circumstances are, there is a vast "repressive apparatus ready to be used." This is the tyranny's reserves, its ultimate guarantor of survival. It is what limits the use of surplus repression.

IN GENERAL the tidings from the communist countries are grim. In revisionist Yugoslavia a scholar is about to go to jail for the Ph.D. thesis he wrote in sociology at Brandeis University. Having studied in our country, he has friends who will notice. But the publicly nameless go to jail with only their relatives weeping, and of course not only in the more friendly communisms like Yugoslavia or Romania. In Czechoslovakia the Executive Committee of the Jazz Section, those musical subversives (see "Hipness at Noon" by Josef Škvorecký, TNR, December 17, 1984) also face a long stretch in prison, and ostensibly also because of convictions for "economic crimes." The Jazz Section has foreign friends too, even an influential one on the left, like Kurt Vonnegut, who has written of their plight in the *Times* op-ed page. But economic crime is now the fashion in communist jurisprudence from Leipzig to Vladivostok. It is more than a clever ploy. It is a strategy shrewdly calculated to neutralize the already phlegmatic concerns of Americans and other Westerners for freedom on the other side of Europe's ideological divide. If the apathy evinced by what Lech Walesa last week called Poland's "shameful anniversary" is an auguring, the strategy will work very well. To our shame.

IRANAMOK

Through the miracle of modern magazine misdating, our contest to name the current presidential scandal, which was announced in TNR's issue of December 22, had elicited 236 responses by December 15. That was approximately one week after the magazine arrived in most people's hands. With nearly a thousand individual suggestions (many readers sent several), we decided to cut the contest

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off at that point and turn the nominations over to our panel of linguists, political scientists, deconstructionist literary critics, journalism professors, and moral philosophers.

After several hours of agonized debate, the panel selected "Iranamok" as the winner, emphasizing its concision, originality, and wit. Six entrants had nominated Iranamok (or "Iranamuck") as of December 15: Ann Doyle Davis of Lanse, Michigan; Marion Whiteway of La Crosse, Wisconsin; Raphael Sagalyn of Washington, D.C.; Kenneth Stevens of Fort Worth, Texas; Deborah Schwartz of Newburyport, Massachusetts; and Patricia Freeman of Glenwood City, Wisconsin. Ms. Davis, who mailed her nomination first (December 8), wins the year's subscription. Sally Quinn of Washington, D.C., asserted in conversation with one of the judges that she thought of Iranamok as early as late November, but offered no proof. Clark DeLeon, a columnist for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, used "Iran-a-muck" in his column December 12, too late to qualify as the winner.

The judges awarded two honorable mentions: to Nicholas Kepros of New York City for "Teflon Dome" and to several readers for various spellings of "Contrameinia"—the cleverest variation on the word "contra."

More than half the suggestions played on "contra," with "contratemps" and "contradiction" each getting more than a dozen nominations. Those of us who write headlines for a living had thought that there was no variation on the word "contra" we had not abused our readers with over the past few years. But among the predictable and familiar variations—contraception, contradeception, contraversy, contraband—were a few new contrapuntal suggestions such as "contrapreneurship" (from Bruce Reed, a speechwriter for Senator Al Gore in Washington). Steve Kover of Silver Spring, Maryland, came up with the classiest wordplay: "Contra Mundum."

We also had imagined there was no unexplored pun from the worlds of ayatollahs and oil sheikhs. Although they were too off-focus to qualify for first prize, we were nevertheless duly humbled by "Saudi Night Fever" (Peter Gillon of Washington) and "Imami Dearest" (three unabashed editors of the *Harvard Law Review*). Several readers proposed "Irantics."

Most readers who chose to personalize the scandal went for Colonel North ("Ollie's Follies") or the Iranians ("Mullahs and Moolah"), but many went straight to the top. Among the Reagan plays, the judges' favorites were "Ronnybrook" (John Lyne of Iowa City, Iowa), "Gipperdammerung" (our friend and contributor Ben Sargent, cartoonist at the Austin *American-Statesman*), "Gipperloo" (David Heymsfeld of Reston, Virginia), and "Where's the Chief?" (Edward Killackey of Washington).

Several contest entrants sent long and impassioned briefs in favor of their nominee. Professor Leonard Fleck of Michigan State, an ardent advocate of "Tehransfer," noted that his candidate lends itself to endless variations such as "Tehransvestite" ("someone wearing no clothes at all but claiming to be fully garbed").

Miscellaneous suggestions deserving either of note or of immediate suppression, depending on your taste, include: "Iran Outta Teflon" (Harris Zwerdling of Madison, Wisconsin), "Boland for Dollars" (those three *Harvard Law Review* brats again), and "Ham and Sleaze, Awry." For that last one, you can blame Don Gannon of Yankton, South Dakota. We only pass it along.

Cleaning up the NSC.

Out Of The Basement

IF THERE WAS one thing Ronald Reagan's top advisers were determined to avoid when they came to power six years ago, it was another Henry Kissinger or Zbigniew Brzezinski in the White House. Their national security adviser was not to be a foreign policy player, but a clerk. To symbolize the shift, Reagan's original security adviser, Richard Allen, was deprived of the traditional spacious and sunny first-floor office around the corner from the president's, and was relegated to the White House basement. He was also deprived of direct access to the president and the right to issue instructions to the bureaucracy in his name.

After Robert McFarlane got the job in October 1983, the trappings and perks were restored, but not the traditional power to get things done. So McFarlane was a frustrated man, and he compensated by tripling the size of the NSC staff, establishing a "crisis management center" in the Executive Office Building containing the latest in high-tech data-retrieval and display gadgetry, and gathering around him subordinates who were "forward-leaning"—bold, imaginative, and aggressive. One of his favorites was Lt. Col. Oliver North. McFarlane left office in January 1986, before North began diverting the proceeds from Iran arms sales to the Nicaraguan *contras*, but he was the man who built the system that Reagan's incoming fifth NSC adviser, Frank Carlucci, is in the process of reforming.

The ultimate bureaucratic manager, Carlucci seems to be getting a good start. Like a newly elected president, he has set up a transition team to review the operations of the agency and recommend personnel changes. He won't take office until January, when his new team is largely in place. He is bringing in his own new executive secretary, retired Army Col. Grant Green, and his own deputy, Army Lt. Gen. Colin Powell, who's thought likely someday to be the nation's first black service chief. Hiring other new people, Carlucci aims to increase the stature of the staff. Carlucci's hit list is said to be topped by those who were deeply involved in controversial policies, or who were too weak to resist being bowled over by the State, Defense, and CIA bureaucracies.

Carlucci worked in the Office of Management and Budget during the Nixon administrations with both Secretary of State George Shultz and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, and he understands their foibles and

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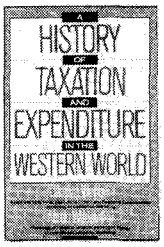

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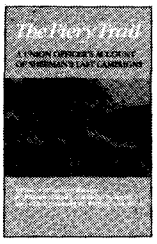

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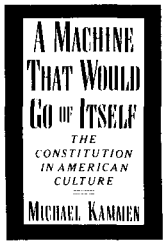

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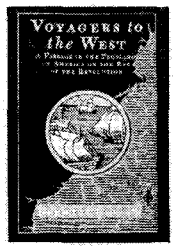

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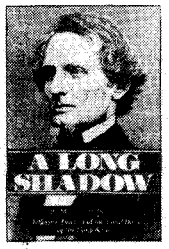

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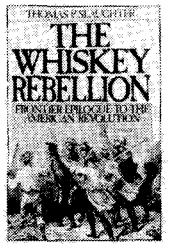

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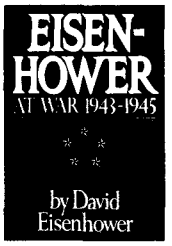

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strengths and their testy relationship with each other. He was No. 2 man at the CIA during the Carter years and No. 2 at Defense at the outset of the Reagan administration. He is a man of some courage and independent judgment. In 1975, as President Ford's ambassador to Portugal, he went around the imperious Kissinger to get secret aid to democratic groups fighting a communist takeover at a time when Kissinger thought Portugal was a lost cause. He has made it clear in taking his new job that he will have direct access to the president, instead of having to go through the White House chief of staff.

McFarlane left the NSC after a crushing battle with chief of staff Donald Regan, who stopped at little to secure his place as gatekeeper to Reagan. Carlucci presumably won't have to face that problem, especially if Regan is replaced. Still, he will have to overcome other endemic problems in the government that dogged McFarlane and ultimately led to the Iran/*contra* mess.

Most basic is the absence of either an overriding Reagan world strategy or a single true strategist. The one idea that could remotely pass for strategy was: Build Up and Bargain. Reagan seems to have spent his first term repairing the nation's defenses and getting a start on Star Wars, with the idea of being in better position to reach arms reduction deals with the Soviets in the second term. McFarlane understood the strategy, and was a principal bureaucratic father of SDI, but he could never secure agreement from Shultz and Weinberger—or Reagan—about U.S.-Soviet policy, strategic doctrine, or bargaining tactics.

Under Reagan's Cabinet-style of government, McFarlane found that on most serious issues Shultz and Weinberger were in conflict, and the president would not empower his NSC adviser to impose a decision. The result was paralysis. The most searing experience of the first term for McFarlane was Lebanon. McFarlane and Shultz wanted American Marines to fight on the side of the Lebanese army, cow Syria's President Assad into withdrawal, and get intercommunal negotiations going for a lasting peace—all of which would have amounted to a U.S. triumph. McFarlane and his aides believe Weinberger undercut the effort by restricting the Marines to Beirut's airport and making the world aware of his opposition to U.S. intervention, thus emboldening Assad and other anti-American elements. "We pulled the rug out from under ourselves," says one of the aides.

FAILING TO achieve any breakthroughs in Lebanon or the wider Mideast conflict, the administration settled on terrorism as a problem it could attack. Only 60 Americans have been killed by terrorists around the world in the past three years, but terrorism became a major preoccupation of the administration. Even here there was bitter conflict between Shultz and Weinberger over the use of force, and it was only when Libya's Muammar Qaddafi provided provocations and a convenient target that the administration could come to agree on use of military power.

Even if Weinberger and/or Shultz were to leave office, an enduring problem for Carlucci or any other NSC adviser in a Cabinet government is the influence of the State and Defense bureaucracies on their secretary. McFarlane and his aides came to believe that foreign service officers are temperamentally unwilling to change any existing pattern of relationships with other countries. And the military, they believed, was so wounded by the public's failure to support it in Vietnam that it wanted no part of any but the most quick and popular involvement.

MCFARLANE'S solution to the bureaucratic problem was to assemble his own clutch of hyperactivists who would think about problems unconventionally and occasionally undertake missions of derring-do. One was Donald Fortier, a mild-mannered but forceful policy analyst who served as North's boss on the NSC's Policy Development Group and ultimately became No. 2 man in the agency before dying of liver cancer this summer at the age of 39. Another was Howard Teicher, 32, a Mideast specialist variously described by colleagues as brilliant, bold, imaginative, devious, and abrasive, who had been McFarlane's special assistant and his companion on dangerous trips to Lebanon. Yet another was Michael Ledeen, a scholar and writer at the Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies who served as a consultant to the NSC.

And, of course there was Ollie North, 43, the swashbuckling former combat officer and clandestine operator in Southeast Asia who became like a younger brother to McFarlane and a grandson to Reagan, who called him "my Marine." A colleague says, "You'd always see Ollie shouting into two phones at the same time. He had this 24-hour-a-day aggressiveness with an even larger quotient of bullshit. You'd be in a meeting, and all of a sudden Ollie would rush in and yell, 'I need such and such—now, or people will die.' He loved the world of false passports and secrecy, which made it perfect for him to work on terrorism, the *contras*, and then hostages. He'd always tell you, 'Don't ask me how; I get things done.' "

NSC colleagues think it entirely possible that if North learned President Reagan wanted hostages rescued and *contras* aided, he would take up the task and not tell anyone precisely how. North has been erroneously identified as Teicher's subordinate in the NSC's Political-Military Group; in fact, North was head of his own Counter-Terrorism Group and undertook any number of secret missions, including one to Europe in February, when he brought along a Bible as a gift for Iranians, and the climactic one to Tehran with McFarlane and Teicher in May, when he had a cake baked in Israel with a key on top for presentation to the Iranians. He also took along three silver-plated pistols for Iranian top officials whom the Americans never met; these guns came back home. The cake did not.

North is the object of considerable affection among NSC colleagues, but he's also judged a spy who never learned the rules of the trade: don't mingle operations; compartmentalize them, so if one is blown, all are not; use cutouts, not U.S. government personnel, when dealing with unsavory characters. As one NSC aide said, "The lesson from all this ought to be, leave it to the pros."

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What characterized all of McFarlane's operatives, according to others on the staff, was their conviction that the world could be changed by sweeping geopolitical strokes. "Their slogan was, 'There are no problems, only opportunities,' " an associate said. One of Fortier's good ideas was to take advantage of the replacement of Indian president Indira Gandhi by her son, Rajiv, to effect a rapprochement with Pakistan and an end to its nuclear weapons program. Some progress was made on rapprochement, but little on the Islamic bomb. The McFarlane team also worked enthusiastically on trying to oust Qaddafi. When it was briefly thought the Libyan leader had been killed in the April 1986 U.S. raid, one aide shouted to colleagues, "I'll buy everybody lunch, and not at the Exchange," referring to a neighborhood restaurant that's cheap.

In the wake of the Iran/*contra* affair, some press reports imply that dozens of irregular operations by the Reagan administration were somehow hatched and carried out by NSC cowboys without adult supervision. That's simply not so. Anti-Qaddafi operations and 30 to 40 other major covert activities were subject to full interagency review through NSC committees known as the Crisis Pre-Planning Group and the Planning and Coordination Group, to approval by the Cabinet-level National Security Planning Group, and to vetting by congressional intelligence oversight committees.

This includes the so-called "disinformation" program last summer designed to torment Qaddafi and undermine his support at home. NSC officials assert that the idea for the operation came from the CIA and was developed in a policy paper by the State Department's Near East Bureau. In essence, it was an attempt to join already arranged military exercises in Egypt and the Gulf of Sidra, new economic sanctions, and official U.S. diplomatic trips to Chad, North Africa, and Europe into a coherent anti-Qaddafi package.

Some enthusiastic NSC staffers apparently did hope aloud that a rattled Qaddafi would sponsor new terrorist activity and give the United States a pretext to bomb him again. Some suggested using non-nuclear cruise missiles to save airplanes and impress the Arabs with American resolve and technological prowess. Whether or not that was government policy at the highest level, the scheme was dashed when the *Washington Post* exposed the so-called "Poindexter memo" and implied that the word "disinformation" was directed at the American press. In fact, the memo was not written by John Poindexter, McFarlane's successor as NSC director, but by a staff aide, Elaine Morton, who apparently hoped to get the president to turn the project off. She was subsequently fired for refusing to take a lie detector test after her memo was leaked to *Post* reporter Bob Woodward.

The Iran operation that has led to such disaster seems to have started out as a piece of McFarlanesque geopolitics: an attempt to make contact with "relative pragmatists" in the Iranian government who may be in a position to resume relations with the West when the Ayatollah Khomeini dies and keep the country out of Soviet hands. The policy apparently went awry when the McFarlane team began making guns and hostages the currency on which U.S.-Iran relations were based. McFarlane himself seems to have understood this and recommended cancellation of the policy in late 1985.

It was mysteriously revived in January, however, and then McFarlane joined up again for one last triumphant mission. He may have been trying too hard to play Kissinger, whom he served as an executive assistant in the Nixon White House. In an op-ed piece, McFarlane likened the Iran approach to Kissinger's secret opening to China, but a critic jibed, "That would be like Kissinger showing up in Peking with a planeload of guns for Zhou Enlai and hoping no one would tell Mao Zedong about it. Ridiculous."

Indeed, the misjudgments here seem atrocious. They were the products of frustration and overreaching, fear of leaks from the press and Congress, bypassing professionals in favor of overeager amateurs, perhaps excessive preoccupation with crises (like terrorism and hostages) trumpeted on television. But there's a danger that just as Congress tried to dismantle the CIA after Watergate and the American people elected an innocent (Jimmy Carter) after Nixon, there will be an overreaction after the Iran/*contra* affair. Congress does not need to micro-manage foreign policy even more now; it ought to do so less. The NSC does not need to be weakened, but strengthened in its proper and original activities: preparing honest options for presidential decision, brokering differences between departments and forcing them to abide by presidential policy, providing independent judgments on what policy the administration ought to adopt. Carlucci will not need to do less than McFarlane and his team of activists did. To make anything positive happen in foreign policy for the next two years, he will need the power to do more.

MORTON KONDRACKE

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

PARDON?

THE MOST DREADED subject came up in mid-December, when the senior staff at the White House gathered in the Roosevelt Room for a late-afternoon strategy session on the Iran scandal. Patrick J. Buchanan, the president's director of communications, mentioned it first—a pardon for John Poindexter and Oliver North, the former National Security Council officials implicated in the diversion of profits from the Iranian arms deal to the Nicaraguan *contras.* Buchanan didn't advocate a pardon, but the mere mention brought on groans and guffaws. "We all had a good laugh," says a presidential aide. "A pardon is politically impossible, given the recent history of pardons." But, the aide joshed, "It is certainly one way to test how firm the president's level of popularity is."

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That kind of test Reagan doesn't need. What he does need is some way to persuade the country that he is telling the truth about the money funneled to the *contras*. The president insists he didn't know a thing about it, but the public is dubious. A *New York Times*/CBS News poll found that more Americans think he is lying (47 percent) than not (37 percent). Though Reagan's job performance rating has bounced back (up from 47 percent to 55 percent in the latest sampling by presidential pollster Richard Wirthlin), national skepticism about what he knew of the secret *contra* funding is no minor matter. It is "the 99 percent heart of the problem," says a senior White House adviser. So long as the president is seen as having transferred money to the *contras* and now lying about it, the scandal is Watergate-sized. And the Watergate question is applicable: What did the president know and when did he know it? The White House believes that if there were some way to separate Reagan from the diversion, some way to show that he's not lying, the scandal would be diminished.

IT ISN'T EASY. Assuming the president is telling the truth—a big assumption, but so far there's no evidence to the contrary—the White House must provide confirmation of his story. That leads to Poindexter and North, the two who know for certain if Reagan was involved. Why not just ask them? That's what two congressional committees did, and both men took the Fifth Amendment and refused to testify, presumably out of fear that their testimony could be used against them in criminal prosecutions. Some other way must be found to get them to talk. The White House staff is desperate to find it, even to the point of considering a pardon.

There are two problems with a pardon. One, it would touch off a political fire storm, just as President Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon did in 1974. "It's a solution that's worse than the problem," says a senior aide. "It was hammered down before it saw the light of day." Two, it wouldn't necessarily separate Reagan from the diversion of funds. Think about it. Would you believe Poindexter and North, brimming with gratitude to Reagan for having saved them from prosecution, if they suddenly announced that Reagan knew nothing? Of course not. You'd figure there had been a tit-for-tat. Reagan pardons them, they return the favor.

Short of a pardon, there's always immunity, which the White House would love to see granted. A Senate or House committee could give Poindexter and North "use" immunity for their testimony. In other words, they might still be prosecuted, but their Capitol Hill testimony couldn't be used against them. The trouble with this is that congressional Democrats won't go along. At least now, before the special prosecutor has set up shop and amassed evidence of his own, they won't. Why should they? It's not their job to substantiate the president's truthfulness as hastily as possible. That's up to the White House. But presidential aides concede that Poindexter and North would have no incentive to testify about the president's role without immunity. "Why would John's and Ollie's lawyers give away their hole card now when they can trade it for immunity" later? asks a senior official. The answer is, they wouldn't.

Still, Poindexter and North are military men on active duty, Poindexter a vice admiral in the Navy, North a lieutenant colonel in the Marines, and Reagan is their commander in chief. Given this, Peter Wallison, the White House legal counsel, checked into the president's authority to order both men to testify on Capitol Hill. This too proved to be a dry hole. Poindexter and North may be Reagan's subordinates, Wallison found, but that doesn't give the president the power to override their constitutional rights, such as the Fifth Amendment right to avoid self-incrimination. The president can't even order current White House staffers to testify on pain of dismissal. Thus the White House was powerless to avert the politically embarrassing appearance before the Senate Intelligence Committee on December 12 of Robert Earl, formerly North's deputy and still a member of the NSC staff. Earl declined to testify on the Sixth Amendment grounds that he and his lawyer were unprepared.

Enter Republican Senators Robert Dole and Paul Laxalt with a suggestion. Poindexter and North, they said, should tell the president all they know about the arms deal and the diversion of funds. Then Reagan could announce his findings to the American people. Who would believe him? It would be his word again, still unsubstantiated by public testimony from Poindexter and North. Besides, the issue is whether Reagan knew anything about the diversion. Having talked to Poindexter and North, should Reagan emerge and declare that they've assured him he didn't know a thing? He'd look like a dope, and a dope without any credibility at that. Dennis Thomas, the deputy chief of staff, explained all this to Laxalt, who dropped the suggestion. Dole persists.

RELUCTANTLY, Reagan and his aides have concluded that there is no quick exit from what one official calls "the president's perplexing dilemma." Reagan wants the full story out, but just can't pull it off. The best he can do is get out the story that he wants the full story out. That amounts to image-building in the midst of a crisis. And the best guess at the White House is that the crisis will linger on until early spring, when Poindexter and North testify, with immunity, before the Senate and House select committees investigating the scandal. "I don't think you can short-circuit the process," says a gloomy aide. "We have to take the longer view than thinking we can fix it in six days or three days. We have to look over six months." Another official adds, "If you have a conundrum to which there is no solution, you have to live with it. It's like arthritis."

To ease the pain, Buchanan went public with criticism of fainthearted Republicans who aren't backing the president and with praise of North. Neither Reagan nor White House chief of staff Donald T. Regan objected, since there was no one else to carry the flag. Regan couldn't go public because reporters would pummel him with questions about details of the arms deal and diversion of money. "You wouldn't get the right headlines and the right stories

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from that," says a Reagan aide. For public relations purposes, Regan is "contaminated," the aide says. Other administration officials are either too obscure to draw press attention or too wishy-washy to make the president's case boldly. Not Buchanan. He brushed aside questions about details, claiming lack of knowledge, and talked up the Reagan presidency. Buchanan had doubts about whether he'd really help the president. The day after he'd lauded North before a Cuban-American audience in Miami and appeared on a network news show, he turned on the TV in his hotel. Democratic Representative Michael Barnes was on a morning show calling for his dismissal. Hmmm, thought Buchanan, it must be working.

Reagan's outside advisers tell him that firing Regan, CIA Director William Casey, and others would ease the pain of the scandal even more. Mass dismissals would also make him appear more believable, says Republican strategist John Sears. Reagan asserts he's trying to get all the facts out, argues Sears, but acts like a man who isn't. On the assumption the president is telling the truth and the diversion went on without his knowledge, the logical next step would be to fire everyone who carried out the diversion or let it happen. Instead, Reagan allows Poindexter to resign, fires North, and keeps everyone else on board. On top of that, he telephones North and calls him a national hero. Now, Sears asks, what would the president do if he were lying and actually had known all along about the diversion? Most likely, exactly what Reagan did.

The president's aides don't buy the Sears line, and you can't blame them. Should Reagan take Sears's advice, most of them would be out of a job. They contend that canning Regan and his minions would only whet the appetite of Congress and the press for more dismissals. It would be an admission that Regan and others had been engaged in wrongdoing. Their response is the same as when the idea of a pardon comes up: it would only make matters worse. Perhaps, but it's hard to imagine that things can get much worse.

FRED BARNES

THE MONEY CULTURE

THE SHRUG MARKET

WHILE YOU'RE TRYING to figure out where to put your IRA money, consider this: one of the best investments of 1986 was the South African stock market. It is up 48 percent, and closed the year only three or four percentage points off its all-time high. Sanctions, censorship, boycotts, shootings, riots, flaming necklaces? Hey, no big deal. Markets are interested in money, not in all that social and political nonsense. Or so, anyway, goes the conventional wisdom.

But actually, politics is the market's blind spot. The market is cynical about politics. How, for example, has it reacted to the Boesky affair, and to the Iran-*contra* arms scandal, both of which have clear political consequences? With two shrugs. Right after the stock market closed on Friday, November 14, the Securities and Exchange Commission announced its settlement with Boesky. The Dow Jones industrial average stood at 1874. On the next two trading days, the Dow dropped a total of 56 points, but it bounced back to finish the week at 1894. The market was actually *bullish* on Boesky. Then the arms scandal broke. And again the Dow continued to rise. It hit a record 1956 two weeks ago, then backed off a bit and finished at 1936 on December 16.

It is impossible to judge how the market reacts to any one discrete piece of news. You can't do a controlled stock-market experiment. It's possible that, if the Boesky and Iran affairs hadn't occurred, the market would have risen 600 points in the past month instead of 60. But it's safe to say that neither scandal has seriously damaged the market.

At first, this political obliviousness made me suspicious. I asked myself: "What did the market know and when did it know it?" Remember that investors look to the future, and the price of any stock reflects that anticipation. In other words, savvy investors (even those without inside information) know long in advance that a company's sales are not strong and that it's going to report poor earnings in, say, the third quarter. So the stock begins falling well before those earnings are announced. Then, when the announcement comes, the stock doesn't plummet all at once (it may even rise), since knowledge of lower earnings is already built into its price. Investors had already "discounted" the bad news.

It is likely that the market did in fact discount the Boesky scandal. Few on Wall Street were really shocked at the insider-trading revelations. But the case of what my colleagues at TNR insist on calling "Iranamok" is different. Did certain investors have a line to North and Poindexter? Did the market know months ago that the story was going to break? As exciting as this would be, I doubt that it's true. The stock market found out about Iranamok at the same time the rest of us did. So why didn't the market fall?

THE ANSWER IS that markets take the macho attitude that what matters is money and only money. They ignore tedious social and political matters and keep their eye on the true target. Thus, the bullish South African bourse. Investors are shrugging off Iranamok because they don't see it leading to anything that would hurt corporate profits or the economy as a whole. So what if Donald Regan and William Casey get fired? Watergate led to the resignation of a president, and—so Wall Street has always believed—it didn't shake the market, so why should we worry about Iranamok?

The market is predictive. But that doesn't mean that its

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predictions are always right. I think that Iranamok may be a case where the market is wrong. And it's instructive to examine what really happened to stocks during Watergate. They went down. The Watergate crisis ran for nearly two years, and over that period the Standard & Poor's 500-stock index (the broadest stock average) fell sharply—by 41.9 percent. Consumer stocks were hit especially hard. McDonald's was down 61.5 percent; Polaroid, 85.2 percent; Gillette, 60.3 percent.

But Watergate also coincided with the Yom Kippur War, the rise of OPEC, and the quintupling of oil prices. Which event—the oil shock or Watergate—did more damage? It's impossible to tell, but it is clear that the market was falling long before the oil embargo was put in place in October 1973. Watergate was not solely responsible for the Dow Jones industrial average plunging from 1052 on January 11, 1973, to 578 on December 7, 1974. But it played a big role.

What did Watergate do exactly? It shook the confidence of consumers and investors. This is a vague concept, but an important one. Surveys taken by the University of Michigan before Iranamok showed that Americans were 50 percent more confident about the future under Reagan than they were during Watergate. What was the consequence of falling confidence in 1973 and 1974? The price-to-earnings ratio of stocks plummeted. In other words, in 1974 investors were only willing to pay $6.20 for every dollar in profits that a company earned. Today they're paying $17. That 1974 figure was the lowest P-E ratio in the modern history of the stock market.

Understand that the current health of business is not the issue. In 1974 the 20 stocks that constitute the Dow Jones industrial average earned $99. In 1985 those same stocks actually earned less money—only $96. But the Dow Jones average itself was up more than 900 points. The reason? The P-E ratio had risen to 16 because investors felt good about the future course of the economy.

WHAT DRIVES the market is anticipation, not reality. If consumers and investors suddenly get worried about the future—as a result, for example, of a beloved avuncular president turning out to be a dissembler—then the market can fall precipitately, no matter how much money companies may be making.

Giving stock tips is not my specialty. You're on your own. I'm merely telling you what I'm going to do. I'm buying $1,000 worth of February 230 "puts" on the S & P Index, which is now at 237. A "put" is a stock option in which I wager that a stock (or in this case an index of stocks) will fall to a certain level (in this case, 230) or below. If the S & P Index stands at 231 three months from now, I lose everything. But if the basket of stocks has fallen by ten percent by next February, I'll probably quadruple my money. Any profits will be donated to an appropriate charity. No, not the Oliver North Defense Fund.

JAMES K. GLASSMAN

WASHINGTON SCENE

GEEK HOUSE

EVER SINCE the 1960s, it's been common for left-wing college students to make their homes in off-campus enclaves where they can live according to their own radical principles. Amy Carter, for example, lives in a "co-op" at Brown with 15 other students whose tastes run to anti-apartheid protests and rolled oats. But these days conservatives are supposed to be the big men and women on campus (at least until last month). What if they tried the communal living thing? It sounds incongruous: crusaders for free enterprise sharing one another's space. Yet that was the basic idea behind "The Right House," a conservatives-only group house set up a year ago at Georgetown University. As you might expect, though, this adaptation of a left-wing form to right-wing purposes ultimately became the victim of its own internal contradictions.

What went wrong? The Right House was the brainchild of 25-year-old Floyd Brown, a former Young Americans for Freedom activist who now works for Senator Bob Dole's political action committee. Its charter envisioned a place where, "through the fostering of camaraderie and networking," conservative students, preselected on the basis of their activist credentials, would coalesce into a committed leadership cadre able to rival better-organized liberals. Brown also saw the Georgetown Right House as a model for other campuses, and set up the Conservative Student Support Foundation (CSSF) to promote the idea and raise money through direct mail. In keeping with Republican principles, the house he picked was no ramshackle urban homestead. It was a $600,000 five-bedroom town house on O Street in Georgetown that rented for $3,200 per month. In order to attract students to this manse, however, Brown was obliged to bend the usual conservative strictures about self-reliance: he subsidized almost a third of the monthly rent out of CSSF's direct mail revenues.

For a while there was harmony among the Right House's ten original members. Their parties were a hit. *National Review* senior editor Joseph Sobran, soon-to-be U.S. Appeals Court Judge Daniel Manion, and Star Wars guru Gen. Daniel Graham held teach-ins at the house. Nicaraguan *contra* Eden Pastora and Angolan anti-communist rebel Holden Roberto came by to rap about the beautiful liberation struggle in the Third World. Senator Jesse Helms's top aide, Christopher Manion (Daniel's brother), served as a kind of outside agitator, dropping in frequently to pluck out a few tunes on his guitar and help map strategy for countering campus liberals.

But communal solidarity gradually gave way to personal and doctrinal disputes. "We all call ourselves conservatives, but we'll spend hours debating the tiniest little tenet," Eric Koch told Georgetown's *Hoya Review*. "There are some vicious advocates of derecognizing Taiwan, but there are also some people who think the conservative view is to

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stick with Taiwan." The main fault line, though, ran between "libertarians" and "traditionalists." The big issue was sex: Did it have any place in the conservative revolution? The house rules waffled pragmatically on the question: "We like to discourage sexual involvement between the house residents because this often leads to friction." But the traditionalists saw this mild admonition as heresy. "We wanted the rules to be that boys and girls shouldn't be sleeping together in the house," recalls Bridget Brooker, who was one of three women residents. "We wanted a clean, moral, fun-loving conservative house."

The libertarians, of course, had other ideas. The decisive moment in the struggle came one evening last April, when the libertarians gathered at The Right House and exercised their First Amendment right to watch an X-rated videotape on the VCR. "The moans of women in orgasm could be heard throughout the house," says traditionalist Naresh Krishnamoorti. "The girls were actually cowering in their rooms to get away from [the sound]," recalls Dean Clancy, another traditionalist. Outraged, Clancy sneaked downstairs late at night and destroyed the tape with his bare hands. When confronted later by the libertarians, he indignantly refused to pay for the ruined tape.

To prevent future monkey business, the traditionalists drew up a new set of house bylaws—including a provision to kick out anyone guilty of "moral turpitude." At a house meeting in May, they won a majority vote, but were overruled by Brown, who claimed that only the CSSF had the right to establish rules for the house. The ensuing uproar broke up the house for good. Traditionalists claim Brown evicted them; Brown counters that most were graduating anyway. In the squabble, one traditionalist even filed suit. He was about to move in for the summer, but withdrew when the fight erupted. Brown refused to give him back a $300 advance rent payment. The case is still being hashed out in the courts.

And the two sides continue to wage guerrilla warfare. The libertarians secretly went through Krishnamoorti's trash can to fish out personal letters in which he says insulting things about them. Brown had to get an unlisted phone number to stop a wave of crank phone calls; his house has been mysteriously inundated with pizzas, magazine subscriptions, and Veg-o-matics that somebody (Brown suspects the traditional conservatives) has been ordering in his name. Traditionalists deny any knowledge of that, but publicly they still attack Brown, not only for countenancing sexual depravity, but also for embezzling CSSF funds. Some say Brown told them he was raising $2,000 a month from direct mail. At most only $1,500 of that went to pay rent and other house expenses, and the suspicion is that Brown pocketed part of the rest. The truth according to CSSF records, however, seems more pathetic than scandalous. In fact, Brown's direct mail campaign was such a flop that he had to lay out several thousand dollars of his own money just to keep the house and the foundation solvent. He apparently made up the $2,000 figure to put a good face on the situation.

Brown is philosophical about the experiment now: "Kids in college do a lot of crazy things," he says. True enough. But to some former members of the house, the debacle is an all too serious example of the general malaise of young conservatism in Washington. The libertarian-traditionalist schism, with its troublesome pro-sex/anti-sex component, continues to plague the right-wing youth movement, they report. "It's why everything conservative in Washington goes sour," says Bridget Brooker.

Meanwhile, CSSF is still $4,000 in debt. Its plans to expand to other campuses are going nowhere. There is a new Right House, on 34th Street in Georgetown, but it is hardly the hoped-for activist center. At one point, CSSF was so desperate for recruits (and rent money) that it had to admit an intern from the liberal People for the American Way.

The group can't seem to live down the disastrous legacy of the first Right House. For example, it is still pleading with the landlord, the prominent trial lawyer (and sometime TNR contributor) Irving Younger, to give back more of its $15,000 security deposit. He only returned $4,000, on the grounds that he had to spend $11,000 to repair the damage the young conservative leaders left behind them. It cost him $1,000 just to have a crew haul away all the trash. Says Younger: "My broker said she'd never seen such a dirty house in her life."

CHARLES LANE

POSTCARD LONDON

BIG BANG BABIES

WE ALL HAVE our own ideas about England. Most of them are distorted. Take the English banker. He is reputed to be a dapper man decked in a fine worsted suit, umbrella, and bowler hat for whom life is a long stretch of leisure punctuated by brief, modestly profitable periods of labor. He is at home in the opera as well as the bourse, talking about Proust as well as finance.

Tourists armed with green Michelin guides are often disappointed when they go hunting English stereotypes in the financial district. The reality emerges from a gray hole in the ground wearing a crinkly blend of cotton and polyester that has never been ironed. Formula 1 racing stripes run down his suit then back up his shirt just in time to clash with the ones running across his tie. He wears no belt, his shoes are scuffed, and his hair hasn't been washed or combed. Each cowlick is entitled to a life of its own. Limp socks bunch around his ankles, exposing pale flesh. Judging from the way he checks his watch, he is late.

Tourists take heart. There is a new breed in the City of London. They at least look the way English bankers are supposed to—well-dressed, for starters—but deeply scorn traditional English ways. The typical new breed banker

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gets to work early and leaves late. He earns many multiples of his predecessor's salary, but feels even that is not a fair sum. He graduated from Oxford or Cambridge, and did once read Proust, but now hasn't the time. He works for an American bank.

The new Anglo-American banker is a product of the marriage between American business culture and the educated English classes. Big American banks have only recently decided they can tolerate new applicants without MBAs—i.e., most Englishmen. Meanwhile, places such as Citicorp, Chase, Morgan, Salomon, and Goldman have doubled and quadrupled their London staffs. One American bank ran ads in the Oxford and Cambridge newspapers, challenging students to apply. The ad (which sounds borrowed from Alka-Seltzer) asked in bold type: "Do You Have a Fire In Your Belly?"

IN THE old days American visitors tried to blend into English society. (J. Paul Getty, up for membership at an English men's club, went so far as to stop talking about his money.) But now it is the young Englishman who is practicing cultural assimilation (which requires, among other things, that he start talking about his money). He begins by learning to sound like a cross between Dale Carnegie and Knute Rockne. "When Big Bang goes off, we'll be one of the few real players," says an Oxford graduate just home from four months' training in New York. ("Big Bang" is the suggestive term for last October's deregulation of London financial markets.) Asked about his trip, he skips over the bits that most Englishmen pause to describe (crime, pushy New Yorkers, the Empire State Building) and gets right to the point: "I never knew my learning curve would be so steep."

Four months ago he didn't know he had a learning curve. American businessmen use the term to describe what happens when their brains are exposed to information over time. The English simply call this learning or, in prolix moments, the learning process. The curve sounds more precise, like something taught in economics classes. Does it slope upward? One hopes. But it can go flat. And people with poor memories could have curves that turn back on themselves like the Laffer curve. So the concept remains vague, but reassuringly American.

Mr. David Walker (Chesterfield School, Cambridge), executive director of the Bank of England, interviewed on TV about Big Bang, actually said, "We can't have a world-class baseball game without the major players." He got it slightly wrong. He should have said "ball game." Saying "world-class baseball game" is about as smooth as wearing black socks to gym class. But never mind. He got the right sport. Bankers lean heavily on baseball metaphors.

It is widely thought that the English, though not averse to *having* money, find *making* money slightly obscene. This is one attitude that, if it ever was genuinely held by anyone, has vanished from the City. People are beginning to allude to how much they make. Since the growth of the American banks has brought about vast discrepancies in City paychecks, the topic is more interesting than ever. Talk about money is crucial, since it facilitates a new standard of accounting wherein money measures success. Sound familiar?

A new glossy magazine of the *Fortune/Forbes* genre called *Business* caters to this new ethic. This month's cover featured the "top 40 business people under the age of 40." At a party thrown in their honor, the 40 were asked to sing:

> Heigh ho Heigh ho we'll change the status quo
> we'll take the lead and show our speed
> Heigh ho Heigh ho

To be fair, some were embarrassed.

Meanwhile, there's a bit of a backlash, but not the sort you might expect. The complaint is not, generally, that a nation with scores of unemployed miners whose families are shivering in Leeds cannot tolerate the obscene wealth of the new young rich. What tension there is seems confined within the educated classes, and to one political party.

Here's why. One Oxford graduate two years out is making a Wall Street-size pile of money, driving a flashy car (Porsche), and immersed in trans-Atlantic speak and attitudes to the point where he can say things like "the English are lazy" without noticing he is one. Another Oxford graduate two years out earns a tiny pile of money and feels his sensibilities threatened when baseball metaphors and learning curves are introduced into polite conversation. The second kind write for a living. That's why.

MICHAEL LEWIS

Michael Lewis, an American, works for Salomon Brothers in London.

And when he didn't know it.

WHAT HE DIDN'T KNOW

SOME PEOPLE HAVE trouble believing President Reagan's assertions that he had no idea his closest aides were selling heavy weaponry to the Ayatollah, attempting to pay ransom for American hostages held in Lebanon, and illegally diverting money to anti-Sandinista forces in Central America. How could the president *not* have known? demand these skeptics. They are overlooking Reagan's hard-won reputation for knowing practically nothing. We ask: Is this really plausible? Our deep reverence for the office of the presidency and our solemn commitment to its future well-being lead us to recall the many things Reagan hasn't known over the last six years. Among them:

A key fact about the Soviet nuclear arsenal. After almost three years in office, he announced to a group of congressmen that he had just learned that most of the Soviet Union's weaponry consists of land-based missiles. (October 1983)

What his only black Cabinet member looked like. When he saw Samuel Pierce, his secretary of housing and urban develop-

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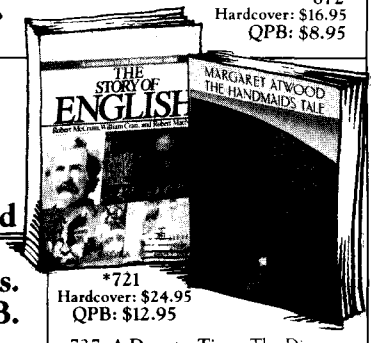

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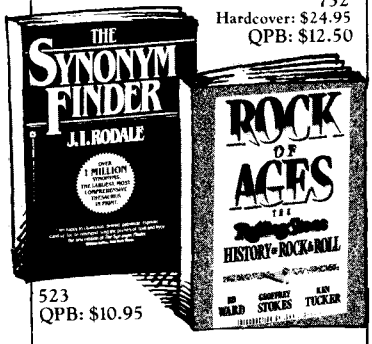

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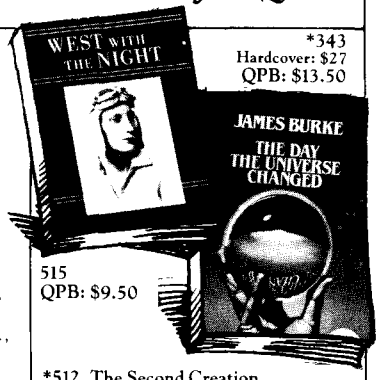

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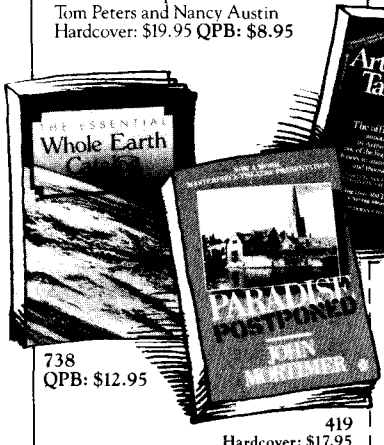

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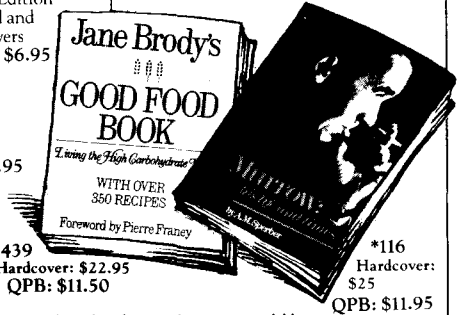

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ment, at a meeting of big-city mayors, he greeted him, "How are you, Mr. Mayor? I'm glad to meet you. How are things in your city?" (June 1981)

How his MX missile system would be deployed. When asked about it by a reporter, he said, "I don't know but what maybe you haven't gotten into the area that I'm gonna turn over to the, heh heh, secretary of defense." The secretary of defense, standing beside him, said, "The silos will be hardened," after which the president volunteered, "Yes, I could say this. The plan also includes the hardening of silos." (October 1981)

That his administration engaged in secret talks with Yasir Arafat and the PLO. His national security adviser said he was "very confident that the president was unaware of any such contacts." (February 1984)

How the pope felt about his efforts to overthrow the Sandinistas. Immediately after he announced that he'd "just had a verbal message delivered to me from Pope John Paul, urging us to continue our efforts in Central America," the pope issued a statement denying that he'd sent such a message. (April 1985)

That there were still segregated schools in America. "I didn't know there were any," he said, referring to private schools that practiced discrimination. "Maybe I should have, but I didn't." (May 1982)

The average life expectancy of a male German. He explained his decision not to visit a Nazi concentration camp by claiming that there were very few living Germans who even remembered the war, "and certainly none of them who were adults and participating in any way." Actually, there are millions of such Germans. (March 1985)

How his tax plan would simplify the tax laws. When a businessman in Indiana asked him this, he seemed nonplussed and said, "Wow! You know, I may turn my head here to Don Regan again. . . . For me to try and off the top of my head bring up some of the other benefits, now, wait a minute." (June 1985)

The details about Mediterranean strife. Asked by reporters to explain what he would do about the situation in Cyprus, he said, "Oh, I wish the secretary of state were here." (October 1983)

The name of his chief arms control negotiator. While attempting to impress reporters with his involvement in his administration's policies, he referred to Paul H. Nitze as "Ed Nitze." (January 1983)

That Marcos stole the election from Aquino. He interpreted the results as providing "evidence of a strong two-party system" in the Philippines. (February 1986)

The answer to a simple question about arms control. He stood speechless for several seconds, nodding and grunting and shrugging, until his wife, standing next to him, muttered, "Doing everything we can." Thus cued, the president declared, "We're doing everything we can." (August 1984)

That he'd called reporters "sons of bitches." A few hours after making the remark, which was recorded on videotape, he told the press, "I thought it was one of you saying it about us. It wasn't me." (February 1986)

The finer points about apartheid. He said the South Africans "have eliminated the segregation that we once had in our own country—the type of thing where hotels and restaurants and places of entertainment and so forth were segregated—that has all been eliminated." (August 1985)

Who he was campaigning for. At an Oklahoma rally for Senator Don Nickles, he urged his listeners to support the re-election of "Don Rickles." (October 1986)

What country he was in. While in Brazil, he called for a toast to "the people of Bolivia." He then explained the error by saying Bolivia was the next stop on his Latin American trip. He was actually going to Colombia and was not scheduled to visit Bolivia at all. (December 1982)

The identity of the Liberian head of state. During a Rose Garden photo opportunity, he introduced Samuel Doe as "Chairman Moe." (August 1982)

The Jews suffered more in Nazi Germany than Nazis did. Defending his visit to the military cemetery at Bitburg, he said that Nazi soldiers "were victims, just as surely as the victims in the concentration camps." (April 1985)

Whether he'd be visiting the Vietnam War Memorial. "I can't tell until somebody tells me," he said. "I never know where I'm going." (November 1982)

The exact location of Geneva. Addressing a gathering of veterans' organizations in Ohio, he spoke of strengthening three U.S. military delegations, "two of which are in Geneva, and one, I believe, still in Switzerland." (October 1982)

The intricacies of British gun laws. At an Illinois school, he told pupils about a British law under which anyone carrying a gun while committing a crime was automatically tried for murder, whether he used the gun or not. When it was pointed out that Britain has never had such a law, Reagan's spokesman said, "Well, it's a good story, though." Four years later, in an interview with the *New York Times*, the president told the story again. (April 1982/March 1986)

That unemployment rose from 8.8 to 9.0 percent. He said it fell, and explained that "the statisticians in Washington have funny ways of counting." (April 1982)

How totally dependent a three-month-old fetus is on its mother. He said that fetuses born this young "have lived to, the record shows, to grow up and be normal human beings," though in fact no such fetus has ever survived. (September 1982)

That the Russians do have a word for freedom. "I have been told," he said, "that in the Russian language there isn't even a word for freedom." The Russian word for freedom is *svoboda*. (October 1985)

Which props go with which Jewish holidays. Addressing a group of religious broadcasters, he spoke of looking north from the White House in December and seeing "the huge menorah celebrating the Passover season in Lafayette Park." (February 1985)

The subtleties of submarine-launched nuclear missiles. He said they "can be recalled." They cannot. (May 1982/February 1984)

PAUL SLANSKY

Paul Slansky is writing a book about Ronald Reagan's political career.

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Or The Cow's Revenge.

THE IDIOCY OF URBAN LIFE

BY HENRY FAIRLIE

Editors' note: In our December 8 issue we published an essay entitled "The Idiocy of Rural Life." The title was derived from a famous passage in the Communist Manifesto. *The article and its title evoked the following response.*

BETWEEN ABOUT 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. the life of the city is civil. Occasionally the lone footsteps of someone walking to or from work echo along the sidewalk. All work that has to be done at those hours is useful—in bakeries, for example. Even the newspaper presses stop turning forests into lies. Now and then a car comes out of the silence and cruises easily through the blinking traffic lights. The natural inhabitants of the city come out from damp basements and cellars. With their pink ears and paws, sleek, well-groomed, their whiskers combed, rats are true city dwellers. Urban life, during the hours when they reign, is urbane.

These rats are social creatures, as you can tell if you look out on the city street during an insomniac night. But after 6 a.m., the two-legged, daytime creatures of the city begin to stir; and it is they, not the rats, who bring the rat race. You might think that human beings congregate in large cities because they are gregarious. The opposite is true. Urban life today is aggressively individualistic and atomized. Cities are not social places.

The lunacy of modern city life lies first in the fact that most city dwellers who can do so try to live outside the city boundaries. So the two-legged creatures have created suburbs, exurbs, and finally rururbs (rurbs to some). Disdaining rural life, they try to create simulations of it. No effort is spared to let city dwellers imagine they are living anywhere but in a city: patches of grass in the more modest suburbs, broader spreads in the richer ones further out; prim new trees planted along the streets; at the foot of the larger back yards, a pretense to bosky woodlands. Black & Decker thrives partly on this basic do-it-yourself rural impulse in urban life; and with the declining demand for the great brutes of farm tractors, John Deere has turned to the undignified business of making dinky toy tractors for the suburbanites to ride like Roman charioteers as they mow their lawns.

In the city itself gentrification means two tubs of geraniums outside the front door of a town house that has been prettified to look like a country cottage. The homes, restaurants, and even offices of city dwellers are planted thick with vegetation. Some executives have window boxes inside their high-rise offices; secretaries, among their other chores, must now be horticulturists. Commercials on television, aimed primarily at city dwellers, have more themes of the countryside than of urban life. Cars are never seen in a traffic jam, but whiz through bucolic scenery. Lovers are never in tenements, but drift through sylvan glades. Cigarettes come from Marlboro Country. Merrill Lynch is a bull. Coors is not manufactured in a computerized brewery, but taken from mountain streams.

The professional people buy second homes in the country as soon as they can afford them, and as early as possible on Friday head out of the city they have created. The New York intellectuals and artists quaintly say they are "going to the country" for the weekend or summer, but in fact they have created a little Manhattan-by-the-Sea around the Hamptons, spreading over the Long Island potato fields whose earlier solitude was presumably the reason why they first went there. City dwellers take the city with them to the country, for they will not live without its pamperings. The main streets of America's small towns, which used to have hardware and dry goods stores, are now strips of boutiques. Old-fashioned barbers become unisex hairdressing salons. The brown rats stay in the cities because of the filth the humans leave during the day. The rats clean it up at night. Soon the countryside will be just as nourishing to them, as the city dwellers take their filth with them.

The recent dispersal of the urban middle-class population is only the latest development in this now established lunatic pattern. People who work in Cleveland live as far out as lovely Geauga and Ashtabula counties in northeast Ohio, perhaps 30 or 50 miles away. A bank manager in Chardon, which used to be a gracious market town in Geauga, once explained to me how the city people who come to live there want about five acres of land. "But they want the five acres for themselves alone, and not for others who come to follow their example, though no one is going to supply the services—electricity, gas, sewerage, water—for a few people living on their five acres. So the place fills up, and soon they've rebuilt the urban life they said they were escaping. What is more, they don't like paying for those services, since the rich come out to escape the high city taxes." They also force up the price of land and old houses, so that real estate is put beyond the reach of farmers and others who must work there.

In the old industrial cities, people lived near their

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places of work. The mill hands lived around the cotton mill, and the mill owner lived close at hand, in the big house on the hill, looking down on the chimney stacks belching out the smoke that was the evidence they were producing and giving employment. The steelworkers and the steel magnate lived close to the steel mill. The German brewer Miller lived next to his brewery in Milwaukee. The city churches had congregations that were representative of both the resident population and the local working population. It wasn't so much that work gave meaning to life as that it created a community that extended into and enriched the residential community, and sustained a solidarity among the workers. It was the automakers, especially the ever revolutionary Henry Ford, who realized that their own product enabled them to build factories far from the dispersed homes of the workers, and not unconsciously they appreciated that a dispersed work force would be docile.

Work still gives meaning to rural life, the family, and churches. But in the city today work and home, family and church, are separated. What the office workers do for a living is not part of their home life. At the same time they maintain the pointless frenzy of their work hours in their hours off. They rush from the office to jog, to the gym or the YMCA pool, to work at their play with the same joylessness. In the suburbs there is only an artificial community life—look at the notice board of community activities in a new satellite town like Reston, outside Washington. They breathlessly exhort the resident to a variety of boring activities—amateur theatricals, earnest lectures by officers of the United Nations Association sing-songs—a Tupperware community culture as artificial as the "lake" in the supposed center of the town. These upright citizens of Reston were amazed one day when they found that their bored children were as hooked on drugs as those in any ghetto.

EVEN THOUGH the offices of today's businesses in the city are themselves moving out to the suburbs, this does not necessarily bring the workers back closer to their workplace. It merely means that to the rush-hour traffic into the city there is now added a rush-hour traffic out to the suburbs in the morning, and back around and across the city in the evening. As the farmer walks down to his farm in the morning, the city dweller is dressing for the first idiocy of his day, which he not only accepts but even seeks—the journey to work.

This takes two forms: solitary confinement in one's own car, or the discomfort of extreme overcrowding on public transport. Both produce angst. There are no more grim faces than those of the single drivers we pedestrians can glimpse at the stoplights during the rush hour. It is hard to know why they are so impatient in the morning to get to their useless and wearisome employments; but then in the evening, when one would have thought they would be relaxed, they are even more frenetic. Prisoners in boxes on wheels, they do not dare wonder why they do it. If they take to public transit, there may still be the ritual of the wife driving the breadwinner to the subway station, and meeting him in the evening. Life in the suburbs and exurbs has become a bondage to the hours of journeying.

The car, of course, is not a vehicle suitable to the city. The problems of traffic in the city, over which urban planners have wracked their brains for years, could be simply eliminated if private cars were banned, or if a swinging tax were levied on those who drive into the city alone. The dollar toll in New York should be raised to five dollars—each way. There should be a toll on all the bridges crossing the Potomac from Virginia, and at every point where the rush hour drivers cross the District line from Maryland. The urban dwellers in Virginia and Maryland make sure that their jurisdictions obstruct any legitimate way the District might force the suburban daytime users of the city to pay for its manifold services. But ten dollars a day to cross into Washington, in addition to parking fees, would soon cut down the urban idiocy of bringing a small room to work and parking it in precious space for eight hours.

On the bus or subway each morning and evening other urban dwellers endure the indignity of being crushed into unwelcome proximity with strangers whom they have no wish to communicate with except in terms of abuse, rancor, and sometimes violent hostility. The wonder is not that there is an occasional shooting on public transit, but that shootings are not daily occurrences. The crushing of people together on the subway can have unintended results. One of my memories is of being on a London tube at rush hour in my younger days, pressed against a young woman who was with her boyfriend. To my surprise, though not unwelcome, her hand slipped into mine. It squeezed. Mine squeezed back. Her expression when they got out at Leicester Square, and she found she'd been holding my hand, and even had begun pulling me off the train, has not been easy to forget in 35 years. But generally even eye contact on public transport is treated as an act of aggression or at least harassment.

This primary urban activity of getting to and from work has other curious features. As every Englishman visiting America for the first time remarks, the smell of deodorants on a crowded bus or subway in the morning is overpowering. Even the stale smell of the human body would be preferable. It must account for the glazed looks—perhaps all deodorants contain a gas introduced by the employers to numb the urban office workers to the fatuity of their labors.

BUT WHETHER they have come by car or public transit, the urban office workers must continue their journey even after they have gotten to the city. They then must travel in one of the banks of elevators that often run the height of three city blocks or more. Once again they are herded into confined spaces. City people are so used to moving in herds that they even fight to cram themselves into the elevators, as they do into buses or subway cars, as if it mattered that they might get to their pointless occupa-

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tions a minute later. The odd thing about the elevators themselves is that there are no fares for distances often longer than those between two bus stops. Office elevators are public transit, free to anyone who needs to use them—but there's no such thing as a free elevator ride, as the president will tell you. Banks of elevators occupy large areas of valuable city land on every floor. This and the cost of running and maintaining them is written into the rents paid by the employers. If the urban workers had not been reduced to a docile herd, they would demand that the employers who expect them to get to work subsidize all the public transport into the city, while leaving those who bring their rooms on wheels to pay for them themselves.

In the modern office building in the city there are windows that don't open. This is perhaps the most symbolic lunacy of all. Outdoors is something you can look at through glass but not touch or hear. These windows are a scandal because they endanger the lives of office workers in case of fire. But no less grievous, even on the fairest spring or fall day the workers cannot put their heads outside. The employers do not mind this, may have even conspired with the developers to dream up such an infliction, because the call of spring or fall would distract their employers. Thus it's not surprising that the urban worker has no knowledge of the seasons. He is aware simply that in some months there is air conditioning, and in others through the same vents comes fetid central heating. Even outside at home in their suburbs the city dwellers may know that sometimes it's hot, and sometimes cold, but no true sense of the rhythms of the seasons is to be had from a lawn in the back yard and a few spindly trees struggling to survive.

CITY DWELLERS can now eat the vegetables of their choice at almost any time of the year—always with the proviso that they will never taste a fresh vegetable, even though the best supermarkets have various ways to touch them up. Anyone who has not eaten peas picked that morning has never tasted a pea. The simple fact is that some frozen vegetables (frozen within hours of being picked) are fresher than the alleged fresh vegetables on the produce counter of the supermarkets. The suburbanite again struggles to simulate the blessings of rural life by maintaining a vegetable patch in the back yard. The main consequence of this melancholy pursuit comes in high summer, when office workers bring in their homegrown tomatoes to share with their colleagues, ill-colored, lump-faced objects with scars all over them, since they have not been staked correctly.

The city dweller reels from unreality to unreality through each day, always trying to recover the rural life that has been surrendered for the city lights. (City life, it is worth noticing, has produced almost no proverbs. How could it when proverbs—a rolling stone gathers no moss, and so on—are a distillation from a sane existence?) No city dweller, even in the suburbs, knows the wonder of a pitch-dark country lane at night. Nor does he naturally get any exercise from his work. When jogging and other childish pursuits began to exercise the unused bodies of city dwellers, two sensible doctors (a breed that has almost died with the general practitioner) said that city workers could get their exercise better in more natural ways. They could begin by walking upstairs to their office floors instead of using the elevators.

Every European points out that Americans are the most round-shouldered people in the world. Few of them carry themselves with an upright stance, although a correct stance and gait is the first precondition of letting your lungs breathe naturally and deeply. Electric typewriters cut down the amount of physical exertion needed to hit the keys; the buttons on a word processor need even less effort, as you can tell from the posture of those who use them. They might as well be in armchairs. They rush out to jog or otherwise Fonda-ize their leisure to try to repair the damage done during the day.

DIETING IS an urban obsession. Country dwellers eat what they please, and work it off in useful physical employments, and in the open air, cold or hot, rainy or sunny. Mailmen are the healthiest city workers. When was your mailman last ill for a day? If one reads the huge menus that formed a normal diet in the 19th century, you realize that even the city dwellers could dispatch these gargantuan repasts because they still shared many of the benefits of rural life. (Disraeli records a meal at the house of one lordly figure that was composed of nine meat or game entrées. The butler asked after the eighth, "Snipe or pheasant, my lord?") They rode horseback to work or to Parliament even in the coldest weather, and nothing jolts and enlivens the liver more than riding. Homes were cold in the winter, except in the immediate vicinity of the hearth or stove. Cold has a way of eating up excess fat. No wonder dieting is necessary in a cossetted life in which the body is forced to do no natural heavy work.

Everything in urban life is an effort either to simulate rural life or to compensate for its loss by artificial means. The greatest robbery from the country in recent years has of course been Levi's, which any self-respecting farmer or farm worker is almost ashamed to wear nowadays. It was when Saks Fifth Avenue began advocating designer jeans years ago that the ultimate urban parody of rural life was reached. The chic foods of the city have to be called health foods, which would seem a tautology in the country. And insofar as there used to be entertainments in the city that enticed, these can now be enjoyed more than sufficiently on VCRs and stereos.

It is from this day-to-day existence of unreality, pretense, and idiocy that the city people, slumping along their streets even when scurrying, never looking up at their buildings, far less the sky, have the insolence to disdain and mock the useful and rewarding life of the country people who support them. Now go out and carry home a Douglas fir, call it a Christmas tree, and enjoy 12 days of contact with nature. Of course city dwellers don't know it once had roots. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

The Same, Only Different

Genre, in film as in other arts, is simply a pattern that is meant to be recognizable in a work that lives, to some degree, by its recognizability. A genre film wants the viewer to place it in a certain line of films, to remember its antecedents, and to admire it for either its fidelity to its forebears or its innovations or both. Leo Braudy says in *The World in a Frame*:

> Genre films essentially ask the audience, "Do you still want to believe it?" Popularity is the audience answering, "Yes." Change in genres occurs when the audience says, "That's too infantile a form of what we believe. Show us something more complicated."

Thus genre criticism is inevitably more sociological than aesthetic; but at the least—and this is far from all—genre films can be read as social evidence. Two new examples fill the bill.

The Morning After (20th Century-Fox)

Heartbreak Ridge (Warner Bros.)

The Morning After is a good example of the "complicated" pattern picture. (I take "complicated" to mean "updated.") It's a mod murder mystery, a film noir without much noir. The first line is a surprised "What the fuck—" and it's uttered by a woman waking up next to a dead man without remembering how she got into his bed. This woman, played by Jane Fonda, is soon shown to be an alcoholic, disappointed L.A. film actress whose only impulse when she sees the knife in her bedmate is to run because she isn't sure she didn't stab him when blotto.

Thus we recognize from the start, or very close to it, the genre and the variations on it. We know from the patterns of the past, even if Fonda doesn't, that she is innocent; otherwise she wouldn't be at the center of the story and we wouldn't be asked to sympathize with her. So we do sympathize with her, while we also recognize her "complications": her alcoholism, her promiscuity, the bile of her professional disappointment. These distinguish her from all the falsely accused heroines of the past as they simultaneously make her their descendant.

This intertwining of genre and variation goes on through the story. The man whom she must, by formula, meet accidentally and be helped by is a former policeman, Jeff Bridges. The reliable old pal whom she can turn to in need, Raul Julia, is her estranged husband. The person from whom she borrows a change of clothes in a hurry is not a woman but a drag queen. The most interesting aspect of *The Morning After* is its somewhat humorous touches of modernization, tongue in chic, while at the same time it reminds us that it's the same old movie, after all.

The trouble with this modernization is that it implies a sensibility in its characters that fights some of the traditional rubrics of this genre. For instance, the Fonda who pulls the knife from the body and then pulls the bloody sheets from under it so that it rolls onto the floor is the stock heroine of this genre, not the particularized character of this "complicated" script. Besides, the genre requires our belief in a protagonist who can shift easily from ordinary life into a police chase; and that belief is harder with a complex character. There are also other plot elements, which I can't disclose, that fight our subscription to the basics of the genre. The script by James Hicks has all the neat junctures and incredible escapes that are par for this course, but Hicks's glitzy redecoration of the old structure doesn't persuade.

Sidney Lumet is not the first name that comes to mind as a genre director, associated as he is with social themes expressed with some individuality, but he has done a fair number of murder mysteries: *The Deadly Affair*, *The Anderson Tapes*, *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Deathtrap*. Lumet directs this new one with not much more than TV fluency; and with his by-now usual cinematographer, Andrzej Bartkowiak, he paints in the by-now usual L.A. background of sleaze-to-swank. Yet even in this trumped-up collection of twists and turns, Lumet shows his unique skill at working with actors. He gets a pleasantly cool performance from Bridges. He sees that Julia is a developing actor, and he helps that development. He knows that Fonda, for all her foolishnesses, is a genuine talent, and he gets from her a portrayal of a disintegrating woman that's too good for the picture.

Heartbreak Ridge is in the venerable line of boot-camp military pictures with an action payoff. The script, by James Carabatsos, was tailor-made for Clint Eastwood. He is now 56, but his character looks and behaves ten years younger, which is ripe enough for the point of the story. Eastwood is a gunnery sergeant in the Marine Corps, now approaching mandatory retirement, a veteran of Korea, Vietnam, and innumerable brawls. He never loses a fight or an argument. The sharp edge of the character is that he is now a pain in the Marine Corps'

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Half Life. An Australian, Dennis O'Rourke, presents a straightforward documentary about the Marshall Islanders who suffered the consequences of the U.S. H-bomb explosion in 1954. (Reviewed 12/15/86)

Marlene. Maximilian Schell triumphs over the fact that the present-day Dietrich would not appear on screen by making an imaginative documentary about her. Her voice throughout. (12/8/86)

Sid and Nancy. Surprise. This film about the lives and deaths of punk rocker Sid Vicious and girlfriend is seriously good. (10/27/86)

Thérèse. One of the very few religious films that are worthy of their subjects. Alain Cavalier's quiet, lovely biography of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux is like an illuminated manuscript. (12/29/86)

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butt just because of his service and experience. His senior officers don't want him around precisely because his knowledge weighs against their rank and because he is too set in old ways to fit in with the "new" corps.

A major who dislikes him gets rid of him by sending him back to a previous camp to train a platoon of recruits. Of course he whips them into shape against their resistance, and they come to love him because they all get the chance to see that he was hard on them in training so that they would be safer in combat. (That formula never changes; and if adequately used, as it is here, never ceases to have some effect.) Eastwood has an ex-wife whom he sees again after his reassignment, and the pair goes through all the maneuvers of hate and reconciliation as if following a Military Film Manual of Arms.

But *Heartbreak Ridge*, too, has its "complications" to modernize it. Eastwood likes to leaf through *Harper's Bazaar* and its kin for sex hints. Ethnic variety in the platoon is represented not just by a black but by a black rock 'n' roller. The dialogue is wild. Dialogue in this sort of film has gone through three stages. First, the original laundered kind—"What the heck," etc. Then Stage Two, in which veristic expletives were permitted. Now, in Stage Three, the dialogue is so laden with expletives and sexual references woven into flowery figures of speech that we feel these Marines have writers supplying them with material.

Clint Eastwood, a marvel for his age, is still the star that he's expected to be, and he handles the latter-day salty rhetoric pretty well. Marsha Mason, always appealing, does what she can with the trite ex-wife. Eastwood himself directed, as he has often done previously, with professional economy and ordinary professionalism.

The action payoff in this film, which is set in 1983, is the invasion of Grenada. This platoon's job is the liberation of the university's medical school. I kept looking for overt signs of irony. There were none. I suppose—I want to suppose—that Eastwood expected at least some of the audience to supply the irony themselves. If true, that's the subtlest aspect of this genre film's updating.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Headline Hunting

Yet another revival of *The Front Page*, Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's 1928 play about Chicago newspapermen covering an execution, would not appear to be a particularly original theatrical idea or an especially bold choice to open Gregory Mosher's second season at Lincoln Center's Vivian Beaumont Theater. The play has already enjoyed three movie versions—one of them macerating this hard-nosed farce into a gender-reversed romantic comedy, with Rosalind Russell as a female Hildy Johnson and Cary Grant doing one of his incomparable comic turns as her editor-lover, Walter Burns. It is, besides, a regular feature of resident theater schedules in this country, and in 1972 it was even memorialized by the National Theatre of Great Britain in a version that, stretched to three hours and groaning under labored American accents, was treated with as much reverence as the Wakefield Mystery Cycle.

This new production under the direction of Jerry Zaks is far from reverent. It lasts for two hours that sweep along like one. From the moment the lights came up on Tony Walton's massive rendering of an improvised press room, with its parquet floors, twirling fans, broken-down chandeliers, overstuffed wastebaskets, old Royal typewriters, and upright telephones—all backed by the silhouette of a Chicago courthouse—I was captured by the show, refreshed as if by a new play. This is one of those happy occasions in the American theater when a familiar work of secondary reputation asserts its claim to classic status. Mosher believes *The Front Page* to be the finest American play ever written. I'm not prepared to go that far with him, but the Lincoln Center production certainly makes the case with persuasive eloquence.

The Front Page doesn't have a soft bone in its body. We are told that the authors originally conceived the work as a satire

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on ruthless reporters and sensationalistic journalism, only to end up with a valentine to the whole newspaper profession. I'm not so sure. These reporters certainly have their engaging side—so do the hack politicians and corrupt cops who serve as foils for their banter. But for all the double crosses, competitive dodges, sardonic backbiting, good-natured chicanery, and idiomatic wisecracks (expressed in that special urban argot that O'Neill kept trying, unsuccessfully, to create), the play provides a glimpse of the seamy side of American politics and press practices that is ferociously contemporary. Earl Williams, an anarchist in an age of "Red Menace" hysteria, is going to the gallows because he has jeopardized the mayor's bid for re-election: he has shot a black policeman, and the "coon" vote in Chicago is crucial. When the governor sends a reprieve in the last days of the campaign—God knows what *his* motives are—the mayor bribes the messenger to say he never delivered it. When the prisoner escapes, the mayor orders him shot on sight.

The fact is that nobody gives a damn about Earl Williams—not Walter Burns, who only wants an exclusive for the *Examiner*; not the reporters, who tailor the facts to suit their purposes; not even Hildy Johnson, who helps to hide him in a rival reporter's desk. Aside from Mollie Malloy, the sentimental hooker who jumps out of a third story window rather than testify, Williams has no value for anyone except as an opportunity for greed, ambition, vanity, or worse. For the press, the highest premium is "the great big Scoop": the reporters want Williams hanged at five in the morning instead of seven, in time for the city edition. For the politicians, whose only motive is perpetuating themselves in office, ideology, conscience, even human life itself are hostages to expediency. *The Front Page* dramatizes Darwin's survival theory with a breezy sangfroid equalled before only by Ben Jonson and John Gay, and only by Brecht and Mamet in our own time.

UNDER ZAKS'S meticulous direction, the play zips along like a hound dog with cans on its tail. Obviously, Zaks responds to plays with an edge (he is equally good with Durang), and this is a remarkable recovery after the blatant audience-fondling of *House of Blue Leaves*. He has cast the newspapermen with performers in the tradition of '30s character actors—Allen Jenkins, Edward Brophy, Edward Binns, the old broken-nose school of working toughs—who lounge at their desks playing poker or hugging phones, "sitting here all night waiting for them to hang the bastard." They recall a livelier time in American life, when it was energy not efficiency that flowed from ruthless careerism.

The casting of the major roles (with one debatable exception) is also impeccable: Jerome Dempsey as the rotund, orotund mayor, equipped (by the costumer Willa Kim, whose period designs are characterizations in themselves) with tailcoat and fez, bouncing languorously about the stage like a huge beach ball on the surface of a pond; Richard B. Shull as the persistently deflated Sheriff Hartman, a Klaxon-voiced pol with a permanent sore throat; Bill McCutcheon as Mr. Pincus, the messenger with the reprieve, a sleepy little pink mouse with a passion for peanuts; Jeff Weiss as Bensinger, the fastidious hypochondriac who sprays his telephone receiver for germs; Paul Stolarsky as the pathetic goofball Earl Williams, appealing vainly to be recognized not as a Bolshevik but as an anarchist; Jack Wallace as Woodenshoes Eichorn, the bullheaded cop with phrenological theories of crime; Julie Hagerty as Peggy, the girl who competes with Walter Burns for Hildy's affections, a thin, nervous, high-pitched hysteric in a cloche hat; and, of course, John Lithgow as Walter Burns.

THIS IS surely one of Lithgow's finest opportunities as a character actor, and although he doesn't enter until late in the second act, he makes the part, if not the play, his personal property. Bearing himself like a Junker general, with a brush moustache and military haircut, he towers over Hildy with the authority of one accustomed to absolute power (at one point, he wraps Hildy's head under his arm and pulls him around the stage like a cowboy breaking a steer). Lithgow offers a considerably more ruthless Walter Burns than did his predecessors in the role (Adolphe Menjou, Pat O'Brien, Walter Matthau)—menacing and dour for all his charm. His passion for his newspaper leaves him indifferent to any weaknesses that aren't exploitable. To an ailing reporter he shouts, "To hell with your diabetes, this is important." "I was in love once," he tells us in an uncharacteristic moment of Sir Andrew Aguecheek tenderness, only to add "... with my third wife." Like the play, he has a cartilaginous heart, and by the time he barks the play's famous last line—"The son of a bitch stole my *watch*!"—he has created a comic scoundrel unique in the annals of deception.

The casting flaw is Richard Thomas's Hildy Johnson. When he first appears on stage, a slight, youthful figure in a camel's hair coat, it looks as though a stripling has been called in to do the work of a man. Paradoxically, however, Thomas ends up contributing one of the most detailed performances in the production, precisely because he *has* been miscast. Like a repertory company actor challenged by a part for which he has to stretch and transform, he builds his character piece by piece, and with such commitment that he proves he understands the role, even if he doesn't finally claim it. His hair slicked down, his accent washed with a Chicago rinse, dancing about the stage like a cocky young torero making passes, Thomas brings a crackling energy to Hildy that almost makes you forget he lacks the seasoning and the grit. He's the only alloy in an evening of tempered metal. In the way it takes a beady look at human corruption, *The Front Page* suggests how soft we have since become as a people and as a culture.

A NEW EXAMPLE of cultural softness is now on display at the Second Stage in Tina Howe's most recent play, *Coastal Disturbances*. Where *The Front Page* is sinewy, taut, tough as nails, this work is almost entirely without muscle tone. Like some members of its bathing-suited cast, it could benefit from a few sessions with Nautilus. Set on a North Shore beach, where the same group of sunbathers and their precocious children keep returning through late August to lay their blankets (unaccountably) on the same dune near a lifeguard station, *Coastal Disturbances* is a one-acter elasticized to two hours that finds its climaxes when a whale gets beached or a child steps on a piece of glass. Yes, people also fall in love and feel disappointed with their lives, and I know what Chekhov said about significant events happening under the surface of everyday trivia. But virtually nothing happens under this trivial surface except a lot of chat among neurasthenic vacationing Brahmins about their personal relationships. (Typical example: "I'm just so alive with him. I can't explain.") Howe's overinsistent insight in this play is that people get snippy when their romantic emotions are thwarted, but she

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failed to make me interested enough in her characters to care *how* they feel. Meanwhile, the work has been structured in a series of aimless episodic scenes marked "Wednesday, 2 in the afternoon" or "Tuesday, near dusk," as if it were a pseudodocumentary action film about tracking down terrorists in Central Europe or drug dealers in L.A. (There's no point whatever in identifying the precise time of day or day of the week if you don't dramatize its relevance to the action of the play.) *Coastal Disturbances* is all very vapid and bloodless, totally lacking in density, and Tina Howe, who is certainly equipped to create wilder adventures than this, should not be encouraged to dissipate her talents in thin-lipped exercises about life among the boring and the bored.

Old Rabbis, New Critics

Midrash and Literature
edited by Geoffrey Hartman and Sanford Budick

(Yale University Press, 415 pp., $28.50)

Golden Doves with Silver Dots: Semiotics and Textuality in Rabbinic Tradition
by José Faur

(Indiana University Press, 226 pp., $27.50)

There was a time not long ago when the term *midrash* would have been as puzzling to most literary scholars as the mysterious Hebrew *Keri* and *Chetiv* that Milton flaunts in the middle of his *Areopagitica*. Now, at least in some precincts of the academy, it seems as though midrash is on everyone's lips. As in most efforts to appropriate an exotic past, this new enterprise is impelled partly by the intrinsic fascinations of the material, partly by an intellectual agenda alien to the historical object of interest.

Midrash, a noun derived from the Hebrew verb that means to inquire, to investigate, to interpret, is exegesis of the Bible as it was practiced during and shortly after the formative period of rabbinic Judaism. The nucleus of the collections of these interpretations that have come down to us probably dates back to Palestine of the third century C.E.; the final articulation of the very earliest compilations occurred toward the end of the fourth century. The classical period of midrash continued until about the middle of the seventh century, and related midrashic compositions were produced for another 500 years or more. Midrash, then, is the great exegetical enterprise that went on during, as well as after, the creation of the Talmud. The Talmud also has exegetical moments, but it is a set of discussions that follows the order and logic of a corpus of laws. Midrash, on the other hand, is based to a good extent on actual sermons, and adheres to the verse-by-verse order of biblical texts. In the classical collections, convention distinguishes between legal and homiletic midrash, known respectively as *midrash halakhah* and *midrash aggadah*. For obvious reasons, it is homiletic midrash that has been of particular interest to contemporary literary critics.

I introduce this encyclopedia-like notation at the outset because one of the unfortunate consequences of the literary vogue of midrash is that some writers have begun to invoke the magic of the name for any interpretive text produced by a Jew. To be sure, the discovery of midrash by literary intellectuals is to be applauded on three grounds: as a distinctive body of athletically imaginative commentary, midrash is bound to be intriguing to anyone concerned with the interpretation of texts; through exegesis, midrash develops literary coherences of its own, both narrative and rhetorical, that are sometimes quite compelling; and, finally, midrash occasionally provides acute insights into certain minute literary aspects of the biblical texts it discusses. Still, it seems important to keep in mind that midrash arose in par-

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ticular historical circumstances, developed certain distinctive literary conventions, and was actuated by an ideology and addressed itself to issues that are not shared by modern literary culture. This element of historical distance does not mean, of course, that midrash is a matter of merely antiquarian interest. And yet something is awry in its contemporary critical use.

THE AMBIGUITIES of the current interest in midrash are vividly mirrored in a new collection of essays, *Midrash and Literature*, edited by Geoffrey Hartman of Yale University and Sanford Budick of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The editors' alliance is underwritten by Jacques Derrida, whose language is echoed by many of the literary contributors to the volume, and who is himself represented (alongside the aphorist Edmond Jabès) in a section called "Contemporary Midrash" by an essay on Paul Celan that is another of his virtuoso performances in punning and conceptual free association.

In inadvertent consonance with deconstructive doctrine, *Midrash and Literature* is a book deeply divided against itself. On the one hand, it aspires to a responsible presentation of the historical phenomenon of midrash, being careful to make certain distinctions between midrash and contemporary critical theory. The book begins with a suggestive essay by Hartman on the story of Jacob and the angel as canonical narrative, followed by an instructive discussion of "Inner Biblical Exegesis" by the Bible scholar Michael Fishbane. Then there are two sections on traditional midrash, written, with one exception, by specialists in the field; most of these essays are helpful guides, though they go over ground familiar to scholarship. By far the longest, and also the most crucial, section of the book is "Literature and Midrash," and it is here that things begin to pull apart violently. The section includes an intelligent essay by Frank Kermode called "The Plain Sense of Things," as well as useful discussions by Harold Fisch of biblical allusion in *Robinson Crusoe* and by Gershon Shaked of midrashic elements in an early story of S. Y. Agnon's. Unfortunately, the other contributors to this section speak in the heavy Gallic accents of deconstructive formula, and all too often the early rabbis are made to join hands with Derrida in a saturnalian dance of "open textuality." These pieces thus lead quite naturally into the Derrida-Jabès coda at the end of the book.

Although the editors recognize that midrash involves a fixed standard of truth that is nowhere to be found in poststructuralist thought, their own language, as early as the book's introduction, tends at points to collapse this difference:

> By confronting the undecidability of textual meaning, this species of interpretation [that is, midrash *and* poststructuralism] does not paralyze itself. Instead its own activity is absorbed into the activity of the text, producing a continuum of intertextual supplements, often in a spirit of high-serious play.

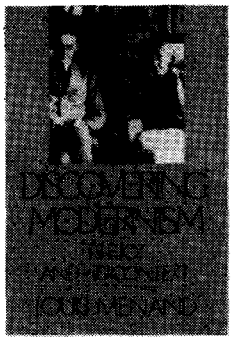
The language of intertextual supplement is orthodox Derridean. Such formulations become even more gratingly insistent in the hands of some of the contributors, like this set of assertions by Myrna Solotorevsky at the end of an essay on Borges:

> What seems to be important are the correspondences between Borges and midrash in the idea of intertextuality, in the concept of reading not as lineality but as a configuration of textual space, in the notion of destructurization of the text as a condition for deciphering it, and in the arch principle, as I have said, of interpretative textuality as the basis of decentralization.

I shall return later to the sheer barbarity of style in these critics—not for aesthetic reasons, but for what it indicates about their relation to their purported midrashic antecedents.

The collapsing of distinctions between contemporary theory and ancient practice is beginning to take place on the other side of the interdisciplinary encounter between midrash and literature, too. José Faur, hitherto known as a respected scholar of Maimonides, has published a bizarre intellectual potpourri called *Golden Doves with Silver Dots: Semiotics and Textuality in Rabbinic Tradition*. In Faur's presentation, there is no distance at all between the rabbis and current literary theory:

> The object of *derasha* [the activity of midrash] is liberation from conventional reading, and dissemination of knowledge; more precisely, it is dissemination of knowledge through liberation from conventional reading. As did Jacques Derrida, the rabbis sought "a freeplay," amounting to a "methodical craziness" whose purpose is the "dissemination" of texts; this craziness, though "endless and treacherous and terrifying, liberates us to an *errance joyeuse*."



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Faur's collapsing of distinctions between the rabbinic and the contemporary is combined with an even more egregious collapsing of distinctions among all the far-flung historical periods and ideological trends of Jewish history. All are amalgamated here as expressions of one underlying Jewish worldview, opposed to what is represented as the Greek worldview: "The Hebrew and Greek types of truth correspond to two different levels of reality. The Greek truth is visual. Therefore it is related to the spatial World-Out-There. For the Hebrews the highest form of truth is perceived at the auditory level." Faur's source for this nonsense is Thorlief Boman's *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, a book long discredited for its sweeping simplifications and its leaps from formal features of language to conceptions of reality.

Still, the invocation of Boman, however naive, points toward the hidden agenda of the new midrashizers. For if Derrida and his literary followers have set as their goal nothing less than the subversion of Western metaphysics, with all its "logocentric" and theological assumptions, then the rabbis become attractive mentors if their activity can be shown to embody a radical alternative to Western conceptions of reality. This, indeed, was the line of argument first proposed by Susan Handelman in *The Slayers of Moses*, which appeared in 1982: it invited us to see a distinctively Jewish, non-Greek mode of thought (an "alternative metaphysics") that descends from the early rabbis to Freud, Derrida, and the Ecole de Yale. No wonder, then, that Jonathan Culler, a leading spokesman for American deconstruction, should begin to murmur resentfully that at New Haven (to which one must now add Jerusalem) they talk as though critical theory were a Jewish invention.

There are marked differences, to be sure, between Hellenistic and rabbinic intellectual styles, but most of these stem from the rabbis' almost total lack of interest in symmetrical, sequential systems of the sort that played an important role in Greek thought. Since poststructuralism is unsystematic as a matter of principle, and often antisystematic, it is easy to see how this un-Greek aspect of rabbinic literature would appeal to it. Still, it is quite another question whether the rabbis worked on assumptions that were a radical alternative to Greek metaphysics, as Faur explicitly argues and as the spokesmen for the Jerusalem-New Haven axis often imply.

At the high end of the scale of expectations, some contemporary critics seek in midrash a historical precedent for a revolution in textual consciousness. At the lower end of the scale, somewhat more sensibly, others propose that the example of midrash will help us understand better how the activity of interpretation in modern literary and critical texts generates meanings and narratives. Thus Harold Fisch, on the utility of juxtaposing the concepts of midrash and of the novel: "The value, it would seem, is not only in providing a language of interdisciplinary communications, but in freeing the categories thus displaced from formal boundaries and restrictions and releasing their phenomenological essence." Fisch is obviously trying to be reasonable, but his formulation might well make a reasonable reader uneasy. What, after all, is the "phenomenological essence" of a mode of literature? Can it really exist outside the verbal forms in which the meanings of a literary text are so intricately embodied? Fisch's own intelligent essay on *Robinson Crusoe* is not reassuring, for although his afterword talks about midrash and the novel, the

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essay itself discusses biblical allusions and Bible-reading in Defoe's novel, which are altogether different matters.

LET ME TRY to bring this whole new enterprise into better focus by presenting an extended example of midrash. The length of the excerpt is dictated by the need to illustrate more than a single midrashic strategy of interpretation. I have chosen a text that I think is fairly representative, from Genesis Rabba, a compilation of midrashic commentary on the book of Genesis that goes back to the end of the fourth century. The translation is my own, except for the biblical verses, where I have followed the King James Version, silently emending it at a few points when its construal of the original clearly diverges from that of the rabbis. The langage of the text, as is common in the classical midrashim, is Hebrew, with some Aramaic (here limited to a couple of formulas of transition) and a sprinkling of Greek and Latin loan words. The midrash begins with a verse from Genesis 39, which tells the story of Joseph's removal to Egypt. The verse is cited, and immediately the midrash, composed of other biblical citations and brief comments upon them, begins:

"And Joseph was brought down to Egypt" (Gen. 39:1). It is written, "I drew him with cords of a man" (Hos. 11:4)—that is Israel. "Draw me, we will run after thee" (Song of Songs 1:4)—"with bands of love" (Hos., *ibid.*), for it is written "I have loved you, saith the Lord" (Mal. 1:2). "And I was to them as they that take off the yoke" (Hos., *ibid.*)—for I took their enemies off from them. And why to such an extent?—"From their cheeks" (Hos., *ibid.*), because of the utterance they emitted from their cheeks when they said, "these be thy gods, O Israel" (Exod. 32:8). Then finally, "and I laid food unto them" (Hos., *ibid.*)—I extended to them abundant foods: "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth" (Ps. 72:16).

Another reading: "with cords of a man" (Hos., *ibid.*)—that is Joseph: "and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit" (Gen. 37:28); "with bands of love" (Hos., *ibid.*); "now Israel loved Joseph" (Gen. 37:3). "And I was to them as they that take off the yoke" (Hos., *ibid.*)—for I took his enemies off from him. And who are they?—the wife of Potiphar. And why, "from their cheeks" (Hos. *ibid.*), to such an extent? Because of the utterance he emitted from his cheeks: "and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report" (Gen. 37:2). Then finally, "And I laid food unto them" (Hos., *ibid.*)—I extended to them abundant foods: "and Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold grain to all the people of the land" (Gen. 42:6).

Another reading: "and Joseph was brought down [*hurad*] to Egypt"—and Joseph was the governor. "And Joseph was brought down to Egypt"—he ruled them, as it is said, "and he shall have dominion [*yerd*] from sea to sea" (Psalms 72:8); he subjugated them, as it is said, "For he had dominion [*rodeh*] over all the region on this side of the river" (1 Kings 4:24); he uprooted them, took them down from their places, as it is said: "and he drew out thereof [*wayirdehu*] to his palms" (Judges 14:9).

He brought down [*horid*] to Egypt Jacob our father. Rabbi Berechiah in the name of Rabbi Yehudah son of Rabbi Simon said: It is like a cow that resists being drawn to the slaughterhouse. What do they do to her? They lead her calf before her and she goes after him despite herself, against her interests. Thus should Jacob our father have gone down to Egypt, in chains and a neck-collar. But the Holy One said, "He is my son, my firstborn, and can I bring him down in disgrace? Yet if I give the idea to Pharaoh, won't I bring him down in shame? Then let me lead his son before him, and he will go down after him despite himself, against his interests." And he brought the Divine Presence down with him. Rabbi Pinhas in the name of Rabbi Simon said: from where do we learn that the Divine Presence went down with him? From the verse, "and the Lord was with Joseph" (Gen. 39:2).

(Genesis Rabba 86:1-2)

Just a few years ago, this would have seemed merely bizarre to Western literary eyes. But today readers acquainted with poststructuralist criticism are likely to detect certain familiar strategies. It is worth listing the points of contact before attempting to sort out the differences. The most obvious similarity is the midrashic proliferation of readings (for which there is even a fixed introductory formula: *davar aher*, "another reading"). This is accompanied by an element of flaunted play with the texts. Such proliferation tends to effect a displacement of attention from the text set for interpretation to the exegetical text itself, and that shift might in some ways remind us of Derrida on Celan, Paul de Man on Shelley, and so forth.

The readings proposed, moreover, are not of any large textual continuum, but of a single verse. As James Kugel aptly observes, "There simply is no boundary encountered beyond that of the verse until one comes to the borders of the canon itself." Indeed, one should go further: it is not just the verse (as is the case in the passage quoted from Hosea 11:4) that is the object of attention, but the single phrase, the single word (as one sees here in the treatment of Genesis 39:1). This atomistic exegesis seems to accord nicely with the practice of the Derrideans, who for the most part have lost interest or faith in reading larger textual continuities, or have come to believe that such continuity is a pernicious illusion. The process of interpretation depends on an elaborate shuttling among different verses, which has the look of offering confirmation of the primacy of intertextuality argued for by structuralists and poststructuralists as the root condition of all literary texts; it may indeed recall Derrida's own agility at textual leapfrog.

The midrashic method of exposition, furthermore, is associative and unsystematic, again in apparent accord with the procedures of certain contemporary critics. Finally, as Kugel also notes, midrash quite often begins its constructions by perceiving some rub in the text, a practice loosely reminiscent of the deconstructive search for the small telltale flaw in the text. That procedure, admittedly, may be somewhat less the rule in midrash than Kugel claims: in our passage, the only rub is a minuscule one evident in the Hebrew consonantal text of the Bible—the word for "was brought down," *hurad*, is spelled, untypically, with a consonantal indication of the first vowel, which apparently encouraged the interpreters to read other, phonetically similar verbs into the word, as well as to detect in it a different conjugation ("he brought down") of the same verb.

HOW IMPORTANT are these similarities between the old rabbis and the new critics? They are one of those instances of the convolutions of cultural history in which a new loop exhibits surprising correspondences to a very old loop, and by so doing shows certain instructive continuities in the diversity of cultural expression. But such similarities are decidedly not an instance, I think,

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like the one defined by Borges in a famous essay on Kafka, where a boldly original new writer retroactively makes earlier writers his "precursors" by introducing the authority of his innovative work into the system of literature. For a start, midrash has a coherence and power not much in evidence among the contemporary advocates of textual free play. In Harold Bloom's terms, the creators of midrash are the strong poets, Derrida and his followers the weak poets. Moreover, many of the procedural assumptions (not to speak of the aims) of midrash are very different from, or even radically opposed to, those of post-structuralism. These differences and oppositions deserve close attention.

To begin with, the associative play of midrash is not quite so free as it may look to the untutored eye, because in fact it proceeds along the course of fixed homiletic convention. Thus, every new section of midrash on the Pentateuch begins with a proem (in Aramaic, a *petiḥta*) more or less like the one in the first paragraph of our excerpt from Genesis Rabba. The trick of the convention—as modern scholarship has shown, and as the original congregations awaiting illumination on the weekly Torah reading surely knew—was to begin with a verse from somewhere at a distance in the biblical corpus, to link that with still other, mostly non-Pentateuchal verses, and then through a grand exegetical arabesque to alight deftly on the words from the weekly portion that were the point of departure, with a revelatory surprise in the juxtaposition of texts.

THE PROEM of our midrash is a virtuoso performance, beginning with the verse from Hosea, which it explicates by citing Song of Songs, Malachi, Psalms, and Exodus, reaching Genesis 39 only by way of "another reading." This second reading, in turn, by relating the end of the verse from Hosea ("And I laid food unto them") to Joseph's role as vizier, prepares the ground for the second section of our passage, in which the verse about Joseph brought down to Egypt is construed as an adumbration of his political ascendancy. It is also worth noting that the relation between the two readings of Hosea is by no means haphazard. What is first asserted about the history of Israel through a phrase-by-phrase reading of the verse is then reasserted about Joseph through a second scrutiny of the same phrases, so that Joseph sold into slavery becomes a typological image of Israel enduring exile.

What assumptions enable the midrash to read in this way? Is the effect of such reading in fact the "destructurization," the destabilizing of the text, that is the goal of deconstructive criticism? The midrash always has warrant to propose "another reading" because the text is divinely revealed. That is its primary assumption. Thus, in principle, the meanings of the text are not exhaustible, are not the univocal or palely polysemous

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meanings of mere human speech. Moshe Idel, in a useful discussion of kabbalistic Bible interpretation in *Midrash and Literature*, rightly suggests that the later mystical doctrine of the infinity of the Torah, a book that comes from the infinite God, has its seeds in the orientation of the classical midrash. But to say that the text is inexhaustible is not the same as to say that it is "undecidable."

Similarly, intertextuality, which is so prominent in midrashic interpretation, is dictated by a firm perception of the biblical canon as a timeless, all-inclusive, self-referential concordance. The juxtaposed texts are not what happens to be in the interpreter's head—say, Hegel, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Carlyle, and Derrida—but what is eternally given as a textual system. This textual system has fixed boundaries, in which every utterance, every word, is potentially relevant to every other utterance, every other word, because all are divinely underwritten. Midrash, then, operates on the following paradox: its reading habits are atomistic, but what enables them is a conception of the Bible as an endlessly complex combinatory unity. The isolation for inspection of small pieces of the text does not bring about a fragmentation of the text. On the contrary, it contributes to a sense of the participation of the text in an overarching unity.

THE ISSUE OF unity points in turn to what may be the most fundamental difference between midrash and poststructuralism. The latter has developed ingenious strategies for exposing the hidden contradictions in all textual assertions, the negations with which all affirmations of value, in the deconstructive view, are necessarily pregnant. This activity of exposure has been generally formulated as the "reversal of hierarchical oppositions" (central and peripheral, canonical and extracanonical, presence and absence), which is the aim and virtual definition of deconstruction. Nothing could be further from the midrashic mind-set. Midrash is unabashedly a didactic mode of interpretation, in which, as one would say in rabbinic idiom, the ayes are ayes and the nays are nays. The free play of midrashic exegesis, far from unsettling hierarchical oppositions, constantly invokes them and reaffirms them: God and man, Israel and the nations, monotheism and paganism, good and evil, redemption and exile, and (in our passage) the Land of Israel and Egypt—up and down.

Historically, the program of midrash involved not the questioning of a canon, but its imaginative and symbolic consolidation. And there were pressures of the era that made this consolidation a compelling enterprise. Jacob Neusner has recently argued that the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine early in the fourth century signaled a major crisis for the recently institutionalized rabbinic Judaism. Subjugation now had to be endured not under a pagan regime, but under a competing monotheistic faith with potent symbols and rituals. Edom, the "wicked kingdom," the archetypal designation of the Roman Empire, figures importantly throughout the midrash, though it is not mentioned in our text; but the story of Joseph's enslavement in Egypt is used to evoke the pain of political subjugation, as well as the consoling promise of redemption.

THE THEME OF consolation in particular suggests the programmatic political force of the midrash, its thirst for affirmation. In this regard, what the midrash repeatedly does is not to destabilize the biblical text, but rather to give it a stability it does not have on its own—harmonizing contradictions, easing tensions, seeking to make bright but distant narrative ends explicitly present in the darkest beginnings. Genesis 39:1 reports a catastrophe: Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob, has been sold as a slave and is taken down to Egypt. The midrash converts this catastrophe into an intimation of triumph through the punning link it establishes between *hurad* (was brought down) and *yerd, rodeh* (to exercise domination). The third pun on this same verb, playing on the word used in Judges 14:9 to describe Samson's scooping out honey from the hive, intensifies this reversal by introducing the notion of forceful removal: Joseph the victim (passive verb *hurad*) is transformed into a powerful mover of peoples. And then the final pun, which revocalizes the verb to make it active ("He *brought down* to Egypt Jacob"), skips ahead from one narrative ending—Joseph's triumph as vizier—to another: the sojourn of Israel in Egypt, which in turn will be the precondition for the grand redemption of the people.

And lest we feel any uneasiness about the certainty of that awaited redemption—awaited in fact by the original audience of the midrash—Rabbi Pinhas in the name of Rabbi Simon reminds us that Joseph brought down to Egypt not only his father and clan, but the Divine Presence as well.

The final point of difference between midrash and poststructuralism is in their style—style being, as usual, inseparable from substance and ideology. David Stern has shrewdly noted the frequency in midrash of the word *ḥaviv*, meaning precious, dear, beloved; he has made the important suggestion that in general the style of midrash can be thought of as the language of *ḥavivut* (roughly, affectionate intimacy):

> Just as *ḥavivut* represents an attempt through literary discourse to recover God as a speaking presence, so the literary homily must be seen as an attempt on the part of the redactor to capture in writing those qualities of intimacy and familiarity that would have been associated by a reader with the oral sermon.

In our passage, one hears the language of *ḥavivut* in God's tender words, "He is my son, my firstborn, and can I bring him down in disgrace?" and one sees it in the homey image of the calf led before the cow to coax her to the slaughterhouse. The pervasive language of midrash reinforces this sense of intimacy and accessibility: the fluent colloquial style of rabbinic Hebrew, at times switching to the actual vernacular, Aramaic, stands in contrast to the loftier, more formal diction of the Prophets and the Psalms embedded by quotation in this plain-spun prose.

IN CONTRAST to the accessibility of midrash, the poststructuralists have made an ideology of cultivating a difficult style, bristling with esoteric language. Not long ago Geoffrey Hartman argued, in *Criticism in the Wilderness*, that criticism owes it to itself to be as difficult as the poetry it studies, with which it enjoys equal rights of primary creation. Subsequently, he has proposed that ever since Addison and Steele there has been a tacit conspiracy in Anglo-American culture to write about literature only in a language that would be perfectly intelligible to the polished gentlemen who frequented the coffeehouses. Because of this self-imposed limitation, Anglo-American criticism, at least until its newest wave, is supposed to have closed itself off from the profundities of Continental metaphysical thought. Alas, most of the contributors to *Midrash and Literature* offer no stylistic

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signs of hanging around coffeehouses. To the quotation I gave earlier from Myrna Solotorevsky I will add, in deference to the reader's sensibilities, only one further example, from an essay by Betty Roitman called "Sacred Language and Open Text":

> In the movement from an existential interpretation to a metaphysical one there is, to be sure, an allegorized transposition which effects a displacement in the use of the demonstrative pronoun from the acknowledgment of a particular presence to the acknowledgment of Omnipresence. To this extent the two planes of signification are in a symbolic relationship, wherein the semantic feature called designation is metamorphosed into a sememe of revelation.

Reading such prose alongside the midrash, one begins to suspect that the supposed language of the coffeehouses may have a much greater affinity with the midrashic language of *ḥavivut*, precisely in the shared assumption that the deepest and most serious matters could be explored in terms intelligible to all.

THE ROLE OF loan-words in these two traditions of interpretation is especially symptomatic. The French-inspired vogue of criticism has triggered a veritable invasion of French and English by Greek: aporia (Derrida), proairesis (Barthes), diagesis (Gérard Genette), and so on. The double aim of such terms is to get at a concept presumably too complex or abstruse for ordinary language and to affirm criticism as the province of a small, specially informed elite working within the coordinates of a closed system. By contrast, the Greek and Latin with which the midrash is peppered are meant to give the Hebrew and Aramaic a flavor of immediacy. The cow in our passage is dragged to the *maqolin*, the contemporary Greek term for slaughterhouse. The humiliation of enslavement or exile is having to wear a *qolar*, Greek and Latin for iron collar, as anyone living in the Roman Empire would vividly know. The shame of being hauled off in chains is *porifo*, apparently a somewhat mangled version of the Latin *opprobrium*. In its borrowings, then, as in its two indigenous languages, midrash strives to make its theology, its philosophy of history, its views of causation and morality, accessible to every ear—as pungently immediate as the trading stalls, the slave markets, and the bathhouses of the Greco-Roman world.

Of course the Torah is a text. But there is an ultimate difference between Torah and textuality, especially as the latter is conceived by the new theorists to be the ineluctable human condition. (In Derrida's famous pronouncement, "There is nothing outside of text.") In the rabbinic view, the Torah was given by God, and is present in the world concretely as the source of all authority. It is not part of an infinite regression of texts mirroring other texts, of meanings endlessly deferred. Its imperative meanings are addressed clearly to the here and now, and that is the core of the midrashic enterprise.

JUST A LITTLE after the section from Genesis Rabba quoted above, there is an almost comic story about a certain matron who asks Rabbi Yosi how Joseph, in all the hormonal heat of his 17 years, could possibly have resisted the blandishments of Potiphar's wife, who attempted to seduce him. Rabbi Yosi's response is to take out a copy of Genesis and to read her the stories of quasi-incestuous union recorded about Reuben and Bilhah, Judah and Tamar:

> He said to her: "If Scripture did not hide the acts of these, who were no longer minors and who were under their father's jurisdiction, how much more so would it not have hidden the act of someone who was a minor and who was under his own jurisdiction."

Scripture is a moral measure, as solid and close to hand as the copy of Genesis that the sage takes out for the benefit of the Roman lady. It provides, in the rabbinic view, a true, unflinching account of the human lives and historical events it reports. And it invites us to match those accounts against our empirical knowledge, in part because we are always implicitly invited to insert our lives into Scripture, to gauge them against it. Midrashic playfulness, then, is driven by a sense of moral and historical urgency. Unlike its supposed counterpart in contemporary literary theory, it cannot allow itself to lapse into the language of a mandarin elite. Nor can it conclude from the multiplicity of meanings that meaning is dizzyingly indeterminate, doomed forever to spin around in an arbitrary game of linguistic codes.

ROBERT ALTER

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PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference by David J. Garrow

(Morrow, 800 pp., $19.95)

This past October several hundred guests attended a well-organized two-day conference on Martin Luther King Jr. sponsored by the United States Capitol Historical Society in cooperation with the United States Congress and the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change. In the Senate Caucus Room of the Russell Building the audience listened to brief remarks by Julian Bond, Senator Charles McC. Mathias Jr., and Coretta Scott King, as well as to formal papers and commentaries by a variety of scholars and civil rights activists. This ceremony of canonization, culminating in the installation at the Capitol of a bust of King, the first black American to occupy a place in Statuary Hall, was much preoccupied with the meaning of canonization. What are the implications for the cause King represented when his name is officially bestowed on schools, a national holiday, and even an interstate expressway in Montgomery, Alabama? Can America honor a martyred radical without wholly co-opting him?

The conference's speakers seemed to agree on the dangers of canonization, of making King "the Uncle Tom of the century," as Hosea Williams puts it in his epilogue to David J. Garrow's monumental new biography. Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln had essentially won their limited revolutions before they were sanctified. King's revolution, at least the revolution he envisioned after 1965, has not even begun. Moreover, for the more radical civil rights veterans it is counterrevolutionary to speak even figuratively of "King's revolution." Several speakers at the conference echoed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's long-standing complaints against the "leader worship" and "cult of personality" that surrounded King. Diane Nash, a leading SNCC activist and co-worker of King's, pointed to the misconceptions fostered by a conference on a single individual. If the young people of today fail to understand that the civil rights victories of the 1960s were won by ordinary people like themselves, they will passively wait for a charismatic father figure like the mythologized King. This pathological dependency, Nash maintained, easily leads to sexism, authoritarianism, and assassination.

But despite their anti-elitist rhetoric and their discomfort over King's charismatic power, most of the speakers celebrated King as the greatest American leader of our century. Garrow, who endorses Nash's argument at the end of his biography, spoke at the conference of King's empowering sense of religious mission that flowed from his epiphanic experience on the night of January 27, 1956. Overwhelmed by the responsibilities of leading the Montgomery bus boycott, shattered by obscene phone calls and a death threat that imperiled his wife and baby daughter, King sat alone that night in his kitchen, staring at a cup of coffee. Then he heard the voice of Jesus telling him to fight on, assuring him he would never be alone. According to Garrow, it was this "mountaintop experience" that gave King the courage to follow his calling, despite his self-confessed sins and personal shortcomings. In another conference paper Nathan I. Huggins, a Harvard historian, reaffirmed the importance of King's unique religious experience and charismatic leadership. Why was it more misguided, Huggins asked, to wait for the appearance of a leader than to wait for the "rise" of an impersonal movement? Cornel West, a young theologian and philosopher from Yale, hailed King as America's greatest "organic intellectual," a man who not only "reveled in ideas" but applied ideas in action.

West's brilliant paper raises an important question about black role models. The image of King as an intellectual was virtually obliterated by the movement he became the spokesman for, a movement that felt compelled to repudiate the supposedly bourgeois ethic of initiative, learning, and achievement. How many of King's admirers know that at Crozer Theological Seminary, where he studied Reinhold Niebuhr, Marx, Rauschenbusch, and Tawney, King was valedictorian of his class and won the school's major prize scholarship for further study? Or that he chose Boston University after being accepted into doctoral programs at Yale and Edinburgh? Or that the graduate course that influenced him the most was a two-semester seminar on Hegel? King was well-equipped to pursue a successful academic career, as well as the ministry. Yet he became popularly known as a spellbinding preacher who gripped people's emotions, not as an "organic intellectual" who fused a rich heritage of Afro-American Christianity with insights derived from Hegel, Marx, Niebuhr, and Nietzsche, to say nothing of the Declaration of Independence. It is a great misfortune that black achievement has so often been equated with Uncle Toms, that attacks on the black bourgeoisie (into which King was born) have encouraged the assumption that intellectual success endangers the blacks' single privilege, which is their status as victims of white oppression.

The tributes that have been paid to King tend to obscure the conflicting interests of his rival claimants. It is a remarkable paradox that the only American who is widely honored today in Third World countries that view the United States as their chief oppressor is also the only 20th-century American who is honored at home with a national holiday. At the October conference Sean Govendor, a South African activist who was sent in place of Allan Boesak, drew a sharp distinction between King's "underside America" and the corporate capitalism that supports apartheid and dictates America's foreign policy. Looking ahead to a total restructuring of the social order, Govendor affirmed that King belongs to South Africa's revolutionaries, to "our tomorrow." Yet King must also belong to the American people, white as well as black, and even to the multinational corporations that helped to sponsor the October conference. It may take decades to gain perspective on this apparent anomaly. For as Lewis R. Harlan pointed out, we don't yet know how far the civil rights movement will extend in redressing the fundamental inequalities between white and black Americans.

The sources of King's eclectic appeal become clearer, however, in Garrow's exhaustive study, which should remain a basic reference well into the next century. The author of two previous books on King, Garrow draws on over 700 interviews of key figures,

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including King's enemies and closest associates; he seems to have combed all the pertinent manuscript and printed sources, including 150 dissertations and essays and the files of 191 newspapers and periodicals. Most importantly, thanks to the Freedom of Information Act, he has gained access to the voluminous FBI and CIA files on King and his associates. Since 1917, black intellectuals, journalists, and clergy have been favored targets for covert federal surveillance. By the 1960s, improved technology allowed the FBI to monitor every aspect of King's life, from his bedrooms to his most secret discussions of strategy. It is a supreme irony that this police state apparatus should have provided historians with more complete information than they have ever had on a major public figure.

Garrow, who focuses on King's leadership of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, relies on skillful narrative almost devoid of overt analysis, interpretation, or moralizing. He emphasizes that the civil rights movement was already gaining momentum among Southern blacks when King, at 26 a rising star in the Baptist ministry, reluctantly revised his life's agenda. It was only the spiritual crisis of January 27, 1956, that prepared King to accept the fear, pain, guilt, and probable martyrdom that were the necessary price for seeing the promised land. But Garrow also shows that even as a student King found Christian faith fully compatible with the hope for a more just social order—a world free of poverty, militarism, and capitalistic greed.

KING'S FIRST speech at the beginning of the Montgomery bus boycott employs the strategy he would refine through later conflicts: the coupling of Christian love with nonviolent coercion, the attempt to strike a balance between militancy and moderation—a balance that would command attention and mobilize legitimate anger without severing ties with advocates of gradual reform and well-meaning members of white power structures, especially in the North and in the federal government. In December 1955 King was content with a demand for a seating plan on buses that would prevent the humiliation of blacks while not directly challenging state segregation laws. Ten years later his objectives included not only a total eradication of racial segregation, but an assault on poverty in the Northern ghettos and a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam War. Even in 1956, however, he had seen the Montgomery boycott as part of a worldwide movement against racism, colonialism, and economic imperialism. What united King's broadening concerns was an unswerving hostility to institutions that subverted respect for "the dignity and worth of all human personality."

Garrow demonstrates that King was remarkably successful in his continuous search for a synthesis of militancy and moderation. Respected for his calmness and patience, he could mollify teenage gang leaders and orchestrate stormy meetings of quarrelsome civil rights associates. He was no less adept at manipulating the media and exploiting the blunders of Southern police commissioners such as "Bull" Connor and Clyde Sellers. Although King relied heavily on advisers, particularly Bayard Rustin, Stanley D. Levison, and Andrew J. Young, he clearly felt free to select, modify, or reject their suggestions as he saw fit. Garrow's evidence indicates that Levison, who broke with the American Communist Party only in March 1963 and who was regarded by the FBI as a probable Soviet agent, was for the most part a voice of reason and moderation.

Garrow in no way minimizes King's weaknesses. King failed miserably at

HOMAGE TO O'KEEFFE

That year I lived with a colorful print
of her *Evening Star* nailed to the wall
of my dark cell
above Jackson's Bridal Shop,
its one grimy window
facing the autograph tree
in front of the bus station across the street.

Each morning I'd wake up to the voice
of a disc jockey blaring above the gears
of the #23 bus
starting its rounds for the day;
each night I'd lie down to the music
of buses returning,
the janitor's saw in the basement.

It hurts me to remember how I lived then,
desolate as my narrow room, roaming the streets
hour after hour
as if I were carrying out the terms
of a life-sentence,
condemned to search
the blank, exhausted faces of passing strangers . . .

Only the evening star soothed me.
I'd lie on my cot imagining
the low, mournful, flute-like voices
of cattle moving across the prairie
in slow motion
under the cumulus white clouds
rolling over the earth.

I loved the bright intensity of fire
in the darkening sky,
the way it hung suspended
in blue-black space—
calm, searing, apart—
surviving the nightfall,
enduring the emptiness.

EDWARD HIRSCH

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delegating authority, disciplining subordinates, and keeping the SCLC house in order. While Garrow does not dwell on the seamy side of the civil rights movement, he provides glimpses of appalling sexual exploitation, financial irresponsibility, and internal feuding. Moments of heroism and communal solidarity were more than balanced, as in most military campaigns, by debauchery, self-indulgence, and confusion.

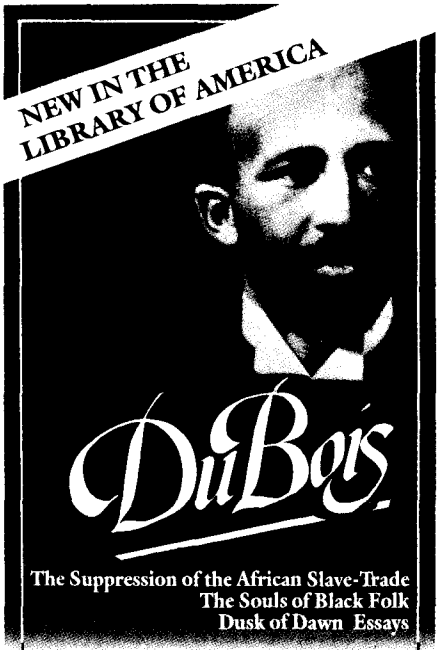
AS A DEVOUT Christian who had studied Niebuhr's explorations of pride and sensuality, King understood his own personal sins, which imperiled his transcendent cause. He felt that he had been thrust by forces beyond his control into world prominence at an extremely young age. Keenly aware of the corrupting effects of publicity and acclaim, he responded to his role as celebrity by embracing a self-destructive schedule of incessant travel, speeches, meetings, and writing commitments. Always repeating himself and composing in haste, King even plagiarized parts of his book *Stride Toward Freedom*, which appeared in 1958.

King found a release from public pressures and responsibilities in private binges and sexual promiscuity. Garrow never explains why King took so few precautions to conceal these escapades, even when he suspected that his rooms were being bugged and when he knew that public exposure would devastate his cause. Apart from the considered and untaken option of abandoning sexual adventures, he seems to have made little effort to circumvent or to neutralize the FBI's listening devices. There is a Niebuhrian irony in the fact that King's most searing anguish stemmed from his public honor, which he considered undeserved, and from his private dishonor, which he regretted but could not control. Yet his acknowledgment of sin may have contributed to his moral authority, and to the precarious balance he maintained between his commitment to rebellion and his commitment to traditional Christian and American ideals. In a decade when nothing was sacred, when professional agitators mocked all standards, King remained a self-confessed sinner who knew that every dream has a price.

It is easy to forget the obstacles the SCLC faced when the organization was still engaged in such limited "reform" activities as registering voters and desegregating public facilities. Besides official and unofficial white violence, the merchants and business leaders of cities like Birmingham were intransigent. President Kennedy seemed primarily interested in keeping order and avoiding unfavorable publicity abroad. While King and Ralph Abernathy sat in the Albany, Georgia, jail the *New York Times* praised "the remarkable restraint of Albany's segregationists and the deft handling by the police of racial protests." After rebuffing King's pleas for aid in his struggle against Southern white terrorists, the FBI offered tapes, including a recorded telephone quarrel between Martin and Coretta, to Florida officials for possible use as blackmail. Along with planted news stories and other dirty tricks, the FBI sent King a fabricated threatening letter and a tape containing the juiciest highlights of his stay at Washington's Willard Hotel. It was Coretta who opened the package and summoned Martin to play the tape.

BUT IN BIRMINGHAM the civil rights forces succeeded in precipitating a crisis that stunned the nation and provoked federal intervention. While King overestimated the number of black adults who were willing to risk their lives and jobs for the cause, the recruitment of black teenagers as targets for Bull Connor's police force dramatized the violent foundations of white supremacy. Garrow sheds interesting light on King's reliance on Washington, and on the continuing chess game between King and the Kennedys, who of course had the advantage of the FBI reports. King shrewdly played on the Kennedys' fear of SNCC. President Kennedy told Birmingham's white leaders that they should be thankful that they were dealing with King and the SCLC instead of with SNCC, which had "an investment in violence" ("They're sons of bitches," he said). After the bombing of the Birmingham Baptist church, in which four young girls were killed, King wired the president that if he failed to act meaningfully "we shall see the worst racial holocaust this nation has ever seen." On the other hand, the Kennedys and their aides were able to convert the March on Washington into what Garrow terms "a celebration and public relations bonanza for both the movement and for Kennedy's civil rights program." If SNCC chairman John Lewis had started to read his radical, unrevised text, two Kennedy aides were prepared to "pull the plug" on the public address system.

King soon showed that he was anything but a captive figure, as he directed increasing attention to the plight of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America's poor, white as well as black. But as one reads Garrow's lengthy chapters on the "War on Slums," the open-housing protests in Chicago, the Vietnam protest, and the Poor People's Campaign, it becomes clear that King's goals and programs were becoming hopelessly diffuse. He struggled heroically to unite reformers and Black Power militants in a cause of nonviolent revolution. He knew that the white establishment would not voluntarily surrender its privileges and open the way to genuine economic equality. He endorsed a socialist goal of vague "structural" change and called for a "radical redistribution of economic and political power." But ultimately he sought to shame whites, not to defeat them. He grafted socialist rhetoric to a Christian vision of reconciliation and brotherhood.

KING'S MISSION revived the disturbing question, posed at the very birth of the republic, of whether America can stand for anything more than the pursuit of private gain. Clearly, having a democratic government has never exempted the nation from oppression, injustice, deception, and officially sanctioned crime. At the beginning of the Civil War, the London *Times* concluded that

> the real motives of the belligerents . . . appear to be exactly such motives as have caused wars in all times and countries. They are essentially selfish motives—that is to say, they are based upon speculations of national power, territorial aggrandizement, political advantage, and commercial gain.

Whatever the accuracy of this judgment, Lincoln insisted that the war was being fought for the American dream, that it was "a struggle for maintaining in the world, that form, and substance of government, whose leading object is, to elevate the condition of men—to lift artificial weights from all shoulders—to clear the path of laudable pursuit for all." Like Lincoln, Martin Luther King revitalized faith in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, in what he termed the "amazing universalism" of the American dream. For all his talk of socialism and revolution, King wept in an open display of emotion when President Johnson, addressing Congress and a national television audience, compared the Selma demonstrations of 1965 to Lexington, Concord, and Appomattox, and intoned that "we shall overcome" America's "crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice."

This very hope in America's capacity for repentance opened the way for the bitterness and disillusion of King's last years. Garrow, who tends to slight social and political context, could well have said more about the poisoning effects of the Vietnam War. But it was also in the old tradition of the American jeremiad to work for redemption by denouncing the nation as a racist, power-hungry state guilty of "psychological and spiritual genocide" against black people. King's timely warning that there is "nothing in this world more dangerous than Negro cities ringed with white suburbs" was neutralized by his agreement with the absurd charge that ghettos were the intentional result of white economic exploitation and were essential to the functioning of the capitalist system. While King drew attention to intolerable conditions that were not being alleviated by the panacea of economic growth, he devised no effective program for fighting poverty. His rhetoric encouraged images of helpless victimization and national cataclysm.

Yet King retained his commitment to nonviolence. His most important legacy is the belief that revolutionary change can be achieved without devastating violence. This was also the goal of black and white American abolitionists, but of course they were unsuccessful. Given the increasing diffusion of weapons of mass destruction, the question of violence acquires an altogether new meaning. One takes hope from the thought that King, and the movement he symbolized, *did* achieve revolutionary change, at least when measured by the goals and expectations of 1956 or even 1963. They failed only to the extent that they assumed that an end to legal segregation would eliminate racial inequalities. They also failed to recognize that Americans historically have demanded that equality be defined in a way that does not inhibit ambition, effort, and achievement. But King and his associates did prove that it is possible to overcome the inertia, self-interest, and conservatism of establishments without lapsing into anarchy. No less important, King showed that a protest movement does not lose strength when it cultivates self-criticism and a consciousness of its own fallibility.

DAVID BRION DAVIS

David Brion Davis is Sterling Professor of History at Yale University and the author most recently of *From Homicide to Slavery: Studies in American Culture* (Oxford University Press).

THINKING OTHERWISE

We Irish: Essays on Irish Literature and Society by Denis Donoghue

(Knopf, 275 pp., $18.95)

Counting up Denis Donoghue's nine or ten previous books of literary criticism, from *The Third Voice* (1959), on modern poetic drama, to *Ferocious Alphabets* (1981), in which he takes on the nouvelle nouvelle criticism—Derrida, Bloom, Ricoeur, de Man, Barthes; and noting the books in between, on the modern American poets as "connoisseurs of chaos," on modern literature's tendency to call into question or merely ignore what he calls "the ordinary universe," studies of Swift, Dickinson, Yeats, and the "Promethean imagination"; and further taking note of his numerous editorial compilations, two in Yeats studies, two in Swift, the most recent a *Selected Essays of R. P. Blackmur* (1986); and noting finally the frequency with which his name is signed to reviews and occasional pieces appearing in *TLS*, the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New York* and the *London Review of Books*, *Hibernia*, the *Spectator*, and THE NEW REPUBLIC, some readers may have concluded that this current Henry James Professor of Letters at New York University isn't a single person at all, but an artel or syndicate.

But he is not. Donoghue is just one very tall, very busy man. A minor item in *We Irish*, a reprinted review of a book called *Castle Catholic*, limns his early background. He grew up in the sepa-

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rated North of Ireland, where his policeman father, originally a member of the RIC, or Royal Irish Constabulary, took service after partition in 1921 with the RUC, or Royal Ulster Constabulary. Though the Protestant bosses of the province found this Loyalist zeal commendable in a Catholic originally from Kerry, they also saw to it that he never advanced beyond the grade of sergeant, and that he did his duty in a remote rural police station in County Down. The son received his early education at a Christian Brothers school in Newry, on the border, then went on to University College, Dublin. It was at UCD, the lineal descendant of Joyce's old university, that Donoghue launched his academic career, becoming one of the arts faculty's brightest stars until his prodigious publication record led to English and American job offers that were too attractive to ignore. The rest is history.

We Irish is a collection of essays, some new, some reprinted, and a wide scattering of reprinted reviews and fugitive pieces, in which Donoghue investigates the literary achievements of modern Ireland, reflects on the new era of political violence that came to Northern Ireland after 1968, and tries to come to terms with the "complex fate"—the phrase is from Henry James, who was speaking about Americans—of living an Irish identity now.

IRISH IDENTITY IS the subtext of the title essay. The phrase "we Irish" is traceable to the commonplace book of the Anglo-Irish philosopher George Berkeley. The good bishop of Cloyne would summarize some position taken by a British empiricist philosopher such as Locke and then write, "We Irish think otherwise." He was joking insofar as there was no unified Irish outlook at that dreadful time of the early 18th-century Penal Era when a hegemony of horsey Anglo-Irish proprietors totally dominated the shackled and wretched native population, rather after the model of Swift's Houyhnhnms and Yahoos. Of course one could always define a philosophical posture, say that of extreme idealism, and call it Irish, just as the opposite outlook of empiricism has been called British. This procedure is what the poet Yeats drew from Berkeley's playful example, first in poems of the 1920s in which he extends the notion of a distinct high Anglo-Irish tradition of intellect, flowering in the 18th century, to include—with Berkeley—Swift, Burke, and Oliver Goldsmith ("deliberately sipping at the honey pot of his mind"), while excluding Roman Catholics altogether; and second, in the very late 1930s poem "The Statues":

> We Irish, born into that ancient sect
> But thrown upon this filthy modern tide
> And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,
> Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
> The lineaments of a plummet-measured face.

The trick here is to leave out of account most of the actual Irish, the largely Catholic native majority, now independent (more or less), who were having a try at representative democracy (more or less) under de Valera. With what is left, the "dark" or mythologized Irish, a bogus entity composed of two idealizations—the ancient Gaels of Yeats's imagination and his 18th-century Anglo-Irish worthies—the poet can strike at those features of the 20th century he finds most loathsome: notably, the high birthrate among commoners that developed from the Industrial Revolution and is deemed to underlie the rise of the "mobocracy," and the assumed indifference of the common man to those monuments of intellect and art that form the threatened legacy of Western civilization from the sculpture of the Attic Greeks onward.

Donoghue has been working on Yeats all his professional life and was at one time the designated biographer of the poet. Here there are essays on Yeats's "Romantic Ireland," on his collection *The Winding Stair*, on his use of symbols, and on his theme of "Ancestral Houses and Anglo-Ireland." Of these the last is easily the most fascinating. Donoghue brings out the basis in reality for Yeats's near-sonnet of 1909, "Upon a House Shaken by the Land Agitation": Lady Gregory's tenants had merely asked for a rent reduction to which they were legally entitled and had no intention of bringing down her "roof-tree"; and he attempts by paraphrase to get at the plain sense of "Ancestral Houses," the first poem in Yeats's great seven-part sequence "Meditations in Time of Civil War."

Owing to Yeatsian ellipsis and contorted syntax, the poem is quite hard to understand. One surmises that the poet, in the midst of the bitter Irish Civil War of the early 1920s, when great Anglo-Irish houses were being occupied and then burned down by anti-Treaty raiders, may even have been afraid to come to the bottom of his own thought. That

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thought seems to worry the insight that rich traditions originally founded upon violent expropriation can never cleanse themselves of the taint of violence, no matter how many generations of fine living ensued after the originating "violent bitter man, some powerful man / Called architect and artist in." William Faulkner develops a similar insight in *Absalom! Absalom!*, except that the American writer works with a much more compressed time span.

Toward the end of his analysis, Donoghue remarks that none of the younger Irish critics who insist that the politics of a poem must be considered in its interpretation and evaluation can really tolerate Yeats's cult of the Ascendancy and the Great House anymore. Here Donoghue offers to play the uneasy role of "latitudinarian," though he fails to make clear what can be compromised. Of course the real bottom line is that younger Irish critics have been rereading and re-evaluating Yeats and the entire tradition of Irish writing in English in light of the appalling violence and smoldering civil war seen in the North through much of their lives. Donoghue, born in 1928 and nurturing his thought on the American New Critics, the Southern Fugitive group, and the transpolitical, "semantic" perspectives of Kenneth Burke, and yet an Irishman for all that, sometimes finds himself trapped between a long view and a view uncomfortably close-up of Irish writing and its occasions.

With Joyce the cruel politics of the Irish question—George Dangerfield's "damnable question"—scarcely need arise. Yet Donoghue, for all his latitudinarianism and theoretical sophistication, is much less interesting on Joyce than on Yeats. Partly it's a matter of where he gets to sound off on Joyce—in pieces for journals such as *TLS*, timed to come out around St. Patrick's Day (sometimes it's a drag to be Irish!) or for an occasional, grudging special issue devoted to Irish writing. Also, I don't think Donoghue and Joyce make a particularly good temperamental fit. In an earlier book Donoghue wrote that "most of the characters in *Stephen Hero* and the *Portrait* seem less than the qualities ascribed to them" and that Stephen's father, Simon Dedalus, "remains cutely picturesque like the citizens in the fiction of Somerville and Ross." This is all wrong, not least on Somerville and Ross, and donnishly overbearing as well. Though I would not go as far as the Dublin poet-critic Anthony Cronin in claiming that Simon Dedalus and his milieu of boozy middle-aged distressed debtors and barroom performers are *Ulysses*' central subject—*Ulysses* as an epic of deadbeats—I certainly agree that some of Joyce's most exquisite comic passages are about Simon and his cronies Ben Dollard and Long John Fanning as they exchange flattering and consoling remarks and discuss tactics for keeping the bailiffs and other distrainers for debt at bay. With his memories of a clean village in the North and his eyes turned toward wide American spaces, both imagined and real, Donoghue probably dislikes the squalor of this material, and yet its representation in Joyce's happy art is as eternal as Keats's Grecian urn with its brede of marble men and maidens.

Of Joyce's last book Donoghue writes in "Bakhtin and *Finnegans Wake*" that it registers

> the matrix of general experience, but with only enough differentiation to distinguish male from female, mountain from river, trees from stones. In this, Joyce and Lawrence are kin: both writers want to come upon life before it has been differentiated into stable egos and personalities insistent on their identity.

This is very perceptive about writers who are so often placed back to back and who in life had little use for each other. If there is a hell for great writers, one sees Joyce perpetually condemned to peruse the pages of *Women in Love*, and Lawrence forced to read forever the *Wake* and its learned commentaries. Donoghue's essay is about Joyce's polysemous fictional language as it emerges late in *Ulysses* and then runs wild in the *Wake*, while the cumbersome terminology of "monologism," "dialogism," and "carnivalization," drawn from a currently fashionable Soviet critic, functions mainly as window dressing.

FOR THE REST of *We Irish* we get two sorts of reprinted fugitive pieces: those in which Donoghue addresses the new era of Irish troubles and those in which he usefully assesses a second order of literary figures—James Stephens, A. E. (George Russell), Sean O'Casey, Flann O'Brien, and the like, often cutting them down to size. The effort is useful because nowadays there is probably too much merchandizing of Irish writing in wholesale lots—it used to be shillelaghs and blackthorn sticks—with consequent distortion of true literary values. One can agree with Donoghue that there isn't much to James Stephens's poetry and that the interest of Flann O'Brien falls off sharply after *At Swim-Two-Birds*, yet it's surprising how close to contempt he comes in assessing A. E. and the playwright J. M. Synge. Indicating that the former was a windbag whose "eloquence denotes nothing and absorbs objects only as stains and oozings," he barely acknowledges Yeats's old schoolmate's valuable work in the Irish Cooperative movement and as editor of the *Irish Homestead* and *Irish Statesman*. I should think A. E. was far from being the windiest among the many windbags of literary stripe visited upon Dublin in this century. There is a valuable, rather full assessment of the long neglected, slow-ripening poet Austen Clarke. This points up how little Donoghue, who is a master of poetic analysis, has written on recent Irish poetry—a little on Heaney, nothing much about highly touted recent developments among poets of the North, nothing about that intriguing, amphibious, neo-Anglo-Irish figure Richard Murphy. Another large omission is Beckett. He just makes it into *We Irish* through Donoghue's reprinting of an old, brief notice of Deirdre Bair's biography.

In the category of occasional writing concerned with present Irish social and political strains, Donoghue reveals a decent concern but not much more:

> I deplore the situation in which Irishmen are killing Irishmen and Englishmen, but I do not think anything is gained by arguing [as Conor Cruise O'Brien apparently had done in a UCD lecture] that a mythology of Romantic Ireland is a sufficient explanation of our troubles.

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One would think not. It would be interesting to know how Donoghue assesses the liberal argument that reconciliation or accommodation between the two parts of Ireland is made difficult by the republic's failure to promulgate a divorce law and a law legalizing abortion.

Instead of talking about anything so embarrassing he praises the poet Heaney, in a Princeton lecture later condensed in *Hibernia*, for digging deeper than the plane of violence, for giving in the volume called *North* "the consolation of hearing that there is a deeper, truer life going on beneath the bombings and torture . . . archaic processes still alive despite times and technologies." Just imagine what comfort this news of archaic processes will bring to the schoolgirl laid up in Belfast Central hospital with a limb or two blown off in a supermarket explosion, or to the woman toiling out to Long Kesh on a drizzly Sunday to get word of a husband, son, or brother held in preventive detention.

Let us not be captious. In *We Irish* Donoghue, who is a genuine ornament of modern Irish culture, pays some if not all of his Irish dues. His publisher announces that his next collection will be *Reading America*, a selection of essays on American themes. There he will be returning to a less troubled field of endeavor. It should be fascinating to read America over Donoghue's shoulder, even if some of us have to get on a step ladder to do it.

JULIAN MOYNAHAN

Julian Moynahan is finishing a book on Anglo-Irish literature and is writing a novel set mostly in the Boston area during World War II.

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A WOMAN'S PLACE

Tuxedo Park
by Laura Furman

(Summit Books, 352 pp., $17.95)

In this her fourth book and second novel, Laura Furman decries the twin bedrocks of wifely virtue, fidelity and domesticity, and recycles one of fiction's most overworked motifs: our disconnectedness from one another and from our own inner selves. Her heroine's description of Tuxedo Park as a place that "looked perfect, even when you knew the houses were crumbling and closed" sets the stage for her parable: "Even then it looked as though there might be something going on—an extraordinary party she hadn't been invited to. It was a place that reminded her of the opera, with people speaking in arias." Indeed, against the aptly bucolic backdrop of Tuxedo Park, Furman's protagonists, however euphonious their arias, seldom do more than train their singular voices past each other.

It's New York 1945 when dreamy and innocent Sadie Ash—orphaned since 12 and raised by her brother, Reuben (a liberal Jewish activist lawyer), in a middle-class West End Avenue apartment still cluttered with the preserved detritus of their dead parents' lives—meets Willard Weaver. "Safe and independent, not pinned down by obligations and cares," and predictably rich and handsome, Willard strikes Sadie as Prince Charming. But to Reuben, a more sober soul, he is "a stranger—I don't mean not Jewish. He's someone who's always a little bit outside."

Willard is clearly an outsider. Orphaned from his mother at the age of five, reared in chilling neglect in an antique-bloated mausoleum of a brownstone on the fashionable East Side by his self-absorbed, hypochondriacal father and a black manservant, Willard is the emotionally stunted product of a loveless childhood. But to Sadie, when they meet, he projects the otherworldliness old money confers and the controlled aloofness that in his WASP circles passes for breeding. A failed but lucid painter—"I moved to Paris to become a painter . . . and I painted there until I discovered how terrible I was. . . . Not even terrible, I was far worse, I was competent"—Willard masks the nagging realization of

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his artistic failure with a fetching dilettantism.

Since in fiction opposites attract more often than in real life, Sadie and Willard begin an affair, Sadie becomes pregnant, and they wed. Much later Willard will remember that "he had married her because he had decided that a family would be good for him, not because she was pregnant." They have two daughters, Louise and Marilyn, and settle in a Greenwich Village mews house:

> Each day began the same for Sadie—dress the girls, talk on the phone with Reuben, checking in, he called it. Sadie fed him family talk—the girls could do this and that, were cutting teeth, could form a letter, color a book. She gave him a little bad news—Louise had cut Marilyn's hand with the edge of a tin can, or Marilyn might be coming down with the measles. She asked him advice, as she asked Louise when they were out shopping—wax paper or aluminum foil? Ann Page peas or a better brand? If she took the girls downtown shopping, could they return in time to have their naps?

Though doubtlessly dull—and Furman is deft at using a deliberately pedestrian style to mirror that of her protagonist—it is the only life Sadie has ever wanted. For Willard, however, it falls short of expectation, and the metronomic pulse of married life begins to jar. Nevertheless, it is to the Weavers' ancestral home that Willard soon retreats, when his father dies "without a word for him."

TWO HOURS from New York and founded a century earlier by people like Willard's grandfather, "who thought if they had a certain amount of money and land, they would be safe forever," Tuxedo Park is a declining bastion for the very rich. But to Sadie, who has sensed with some alarm Willard's growing restiveness, the Weavers' "brick Italianate mansion"—though fallen into disrepair—looms as a haven. Here, on his ancestral ground, the tug of genetic memory will assist her in convincing Willard that he's "bound to her by fate," that family is life's only sanctuary.

With a concept of wifehood that would make Phyllis Schlafly proud, Sadie sets about her mission. There's something at once admirable and pitiable in her quietly stubborn attempt to recapture Willard's straying attention with precisely the sort of suffocating and increasingly maniacal nurturing—cooking as though famine threatened, shopping for an impending state of siege, nursing a cold as though it were pneumonia—that will only alienate him further. As inevitably it does: "Her gift for domesticity was innocent but devouring, and it wore him down." So much so that by summer's end Willard wants out. Either Sadie gives him a divorce, in which case he will provide her with a generous settlement and maintain contact with their daughters, or he will sever all communications and provide them with only a subsistence allowance until she comes to reason. To Sadie, for whom commitment is paramount, divorce is taboo, and the obdurate defense of one's family, however costly, is the only conceivable strategy. She exhorts Willard, as she must, that "this is the way you and I were meant to be. If you don't see, we'll wait for you. That's what it is in a family, Willard. People stay together always." But the life sentence threatened by her "always" makes his desertion inevitable. It is a desertion that will stretch over many long years as it unfolds into a mutually suicidal war of attrition.

Willard lives in peripatetic exile with an old lover. "A companion as restless as he" and also a failed painter, Cherry is the antithesis of Sadie. A once handsome woman long since withered by stillborn hopes and dipsomania, her one accomplishment—to Willard's admiration—is that she has transformed herself from the product of a drab proletarian background "into a woman with opinions on the Fauves and Hans Hoffman." Otherwise, a now aimless and indifferent survivor, she is Willard's soulmate, an apathetic wretch who's learned to demand nothing and expect even less, especially from Willard.

BUT IT IS on her deceivingly complex central character that Furman properly focuses. Though Willard is undeniably a heel, Sadie, beneath her willful virtuousness, is a far more destructive force. Because of her unyielding romantic belief in the permanence of marriage, she opposes an embattled inertia to Willard's curt epistolary injunctions, fully aware that doing so will consign her to years of solitary and barren waiting. More recklessly, she subjects each of her daughters—with almost tragic consequences in the case of Louise—to a sequestered and cheerless youth. However noble she may appear cast in the role of wronged wife and penniless mother, Sadie is the vain sum of her idealistic imaginings. With a secret notion of her own folly, she conceals from those she professes to love most the true reasons for Willard's desertion and the terms he has set for his return. It is only many wasted years later—when Louise (in a rather contrived portion of the novel) attempts suicide after having chanced upon her father's letters and learned of her mother's lifelong lie—that Sadie finally achieves her own epiphany.

With *Tuxedo Park*, Laura Furman proves once again that she is a writer of enormous grace and sensitivity who possesses a keen if unsettling genius for stripping the psyche of its deceptions—self and otherwise—in order to reveal the subliminal conceits that at their most insidious make human compatibility such a formidable challenge. This theme is not new to her fiction, nor is that of doomed mésalliances. In the title story of *Watching Time Fly* (1983), clearly a precursor to *Tuxedo Park*, Anna's blue-collar domesticity is pitted against Warren's aristocratic reserve with predictable results. Since Warren is ever "stunned by small tediums," Anna professes to be "grateful that it was so, for here was a way she could demonstrate that she loved him and was essential to him." Anna, meet Sadie.

Clearly, Furman is haunted by the conundrum posed by such hopelessly disparate personae, and because she is, *Tuxedo Park* makes for rewarding, if melancholy, reading.

LAURA E. OBOLENSKY

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

The Literary Whirl

SHAKESPEARE is always relevant, but sometimes he's more relevant than others. *Romeo and Juliet*, according to the program notes for the recent production at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre, "addresses a tragic crisis facing our nation—teen suicide." A Bernstein-era baby myself, I always thought it addressed the tragic crisis of gang warfare, but I'm open-minded. So I went to the second of two special student discussions sponsored by the Folger, in collaboration with the Youth Suicide National Center, as part of an innovative "dramatic approach to prevention of youth suicide." During the first discussion, the high school kids reportedly were mute while the grown-ups (the head of the suicide center, a theater staff member, a couple of psychiatrists) went on and on about how adults don't listen to teenagers. The students in the audience with me were more loquacious, and they were full of the therapeutic nostrums the adults wanted to hear: forget the friar, there are always hot lines to call about your depression and insecurities. They agreed that sharing feelings is good for teenagers, and seemed to feel that secret marriages and forced marriages are bad for 14-year-olds. Now I'm looking forward to *Hamlet* and rap sessions about coping with parental remarriage. And maybe Mitch Snyder's Community for Creative Non-Violence, which runs a shelter here in Washington, can help stage *King Lear* as a dramatic approach to the problems of the homeless.

IN FACT, I'm all for encouraging interest in Shakespeare, especially among high school students, and this is a great publicity gimmick. (How often do you overhear kids on the Metro talking heatedly about the way Tybalt and Mercutio really messed things up?) But according to Genie Barton, the theater's dramaturge, the inspiration behind the special discussions was not a desire to make old, high culture seem au courant to kids. On the contrary, it was a fear that it might be *too* au courant—that today's teenagers would promptly go out and do whatever the bard appeared to bid. Barton turned to the Suicide National Center, she told the *Washington Post*, "to help put together an educational program for teachers and counselors so that we could be sure that all students who come to our production will understand that Shakespeare did not romanticize it, did not advocate it, but only showed us the tragedy of young people's suicide." Listening to her, you'd think that schools across the country were suffering from an epidemic of kids taking behavioral cues from the classics. This quaint notion that books radically shape lives is a premise of the recent debate about textbooks too. Alarmed parents claim that allowing a child to read books like *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Macbeth*, or *Cinderella* means running a high risk that she'll turn into a "feminist, a humanist, a pacifist"—or, who knows, a pumpkin. Let's get the kids out of the libraries and back into the video arcades before it's too late.

I HAVE BEEN spending some time at a study desk on the balcony that overlooks the main reading room in the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress. It's a very old-fashioned place, with uncomfortable chairs, well-used desks, a clock that chimes often but never on the hour, and a lot of neat librarians and rumpled readers. Yet this library is also a vision of a future that will never come to pass: it's the mature, mechanized Paper State, which has been superseded everywhere else by the Computer Age. To be sure, there are some computers in the library, but they're dwarfed by the rows, the rooms, of card catalogs. Walking through the long underground corridors that link the three library buildings (Adams, Jefferson, and Madison), you can hear "hard copy" information whooshing through tubes along the ceiling and watch baskets of books rolling down ramps. The books surface later on conveyer belts, and messengers with carts distribute them to desks. Everywhere pipes are bulging, pistons are pumping—no high-tech hush here. (If you've seen the movie *Brazil*, by Terry Gilliam, a Monty Python, you've seen a sinister version of the pulsating Paper State.) This fuddy-duddy futurism is surprisingly efficient, although I've asked for books that appear to have vanished from the miles of shelves. My only complaint is the hours of operation, which belong to the days of dark satanic mills. Thanks to successful (and much publicized) protests last spring over budget cuts that closed the buildings at 5:30 p.m., the place now stays open until 9:30. When I sneak out at 6 or so, I can't help feeling I'm wasting the taxpayers' money.

AT 6 O'CLOCK one evening last week, I was sitting in a plush chair at a different kind of bookish hangout, the Algonquin Hotel. I was eavesdropping on an editor as he reassured an author that his career was soaring. Suddenly the civilized literary murmuring in the room stopped. In the corner, cocktails were flying. It was an imbroglio between two ladies. One of them was martini-besmirched—and mad. She hurled her glass of red wine in revenge, and a light spray of purple fell upon the nearby tables. "Get out of here, you slut!" said one as the other stalked off, fur in hand. The man accompanying this lively pair looked on, stunned. But not for long. He had to get down to business. From all sides, he was besieged by wine-speckled spectators, pens and paper in hand. No, they weren't clamoring for details for the short stories they had started to compose on the spot. They just wanted to know where to send their dry-cleaning bills.

MINI-MORAL equivalence time: James Madison may have the newest Library of Congress building named after him, but otherwise he's in eclipse. A recent *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll shows that only one percent of the people asked knew that he played the "biggest role" in writing the Constitution. Founding Fathers, it seems, have a hard time everywhere. Karl Marx may have a square named after him in Budapest, but he's not exactly a household name in Hungary. In a series of interviews conducted right there in Marx Square by Radio Budapest last year, pedestrians asked to identify Marx were stumped, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski's book *Game Plan*. "He died at an old age," said one citizen. Try to remember a few facts from school, the interviewer urged another, who clammed up: "I was absent a lot." Finally, one passer-by furnished more precise information: "He was, you know, what's his name's—Lenin's, Lenin, Lenin's works—well, he translated them into Hungarian."

A. H.

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